Shakespearean Parallels and Affinities with the Theatre of the Absurd in Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*
Anja Easterling

Shakespearean Parallels and Affinities with the Theatre of the Absurd in Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

Doctoral Dissertation

by due permission of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Umeå
to be publicly discussed in the lecture hall F on January 17, 1983 at 10 a.m.
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Umeå 1982
ABSTRACT

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Title: Shakespearean Parallels and Affinities with the Theatre of the Absurd in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*
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The study elucidates the relation of Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* to *Hamlet* on the one hand and to the Theatre of the Absurd on the other. The two plays chosen to represent the Theatre of the Absurd are Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. Since Stoppard is admired as a master craftsman of language, the emphasis is on his use of language.

The extent to which the use of the cliché characterizes the three absurd plays is examined. It is found that the language area covered by the term cliché is not clearly defined and that the term is not uniformly applied. The inquiry centres on finding features, such as repetition, music-hall passages and "ready-made" language, that could explain why the dialogue in the three plays might appear cliché-ridden and on comparing the three plays in respect of these features.

The study further draws parallels between Stoppard's play and *Waiting for Godot* in the use of various techniques, such as misunderstandings, anticlimax and afterthought. It is found that there is often a conscious adoption by Stoppard of Beckett's techniques.

To clarify the relation of Stoppard's play to *Hamlet* various aspects of the two plays are studied. These aspects include changes introduced into stereotyped expressions, punning, the use of parody and the handling of two specific motives, madness and death. Parallels are found in spite of the fact that several centuries separate the two plays, not least in respect to style, technique and language.


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To Edward, William and Elizabeth Jane
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Docent Ingrid Melander, whose well-balanced and constructive criticism has been most useful and whose help has even extended to practical matters. I should also like to thank the members of the English Seminar at Umeå University, who have come up with suggestions for relevant sources; the people who have suggested pertinent reading to me include Britta Olinder, Gothenburg, and Anthony Wild, Kouvola, Finland. I also wish to thank my colleague, Hilary Hocking, for checking the English language, and Maria Hallquist, who at very short notice accepted the strenuous task of typing the manuscript.

Luleå, November, 1982.

Anja Easterling
INTRODUCTION

A Note on Absurdism and the Theatre of the Absurd

In this study the terms absurdism and the Theatre of the Absurd will be frequently used. Absurdism could be said to be both a literary trend and a philosophy. Apart from its earliest antecedents, absurdism first surfaced in 20th-century France. In 1926 the novelist André Malraux wrote his often quoted line "au centre de l'homme européen, dominant les grands mouvements de sa vie, est une absurdité essentielle". The two great philosophers of the absurd, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, wrote their most significant work from the point of view of absurdism in the thirties and forties. Martin Esslin, taking up a connection first made in an essay by Walter Stein between absurdism and the work of certain playwrights, applied the term to a group of dramatists. His book The Theatre of the Absurd, first published in 1961, became the authoritative study on the subject and its title a widely-used critical term. The success of the term has been deplored for two reasons: first, Esslin's appropriation of the term for theatre has, according to Arnold P. Hinchliffe, "obscured the widespread use of the word 'absurd' in other contexts", then mainly in the context of the novel and philosophy; secondly, as Martin Esslin ruefully admits in the Preface to the second edition of his book, "'The Theatre of the Absurd' has become a catch-phrase in its own right which is often thoughtlessly used".

Absurdism

Before outlining Martin Esslin's exposition of the Theatre of the Absurd it seems essential to define, or, as this appears very difficult, to give a brief account of what various scholars have come to regard
as the basic philosophy of the absurd as it is reflected both in the novel and drama. Arnold P. Hinchliffe defines the starting point of absurdism as follows: "I have taken it as axiomatic that for Absurdity to exist, God must be dead and that following this awareness there must be no attempt to substitute a transcendent Alter Ego". The line of philosophers concerned with God's death and its consequences reaches from Nietzsche to the three men usually grouped together as representatives of the Existentialist trend, Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre. Sartre's theme of the separation of consciousness (pour-soi) from "things-in-themselves" (en-soi), the utter freedom of conscious beings to create each moment and the resulting alienation and anguish, from which an individual may seek refuge in Bad Faith (mauvaise foi), has affinities with absurdism, even if it cannot be regarded as the absurdist credo. André Malraux also saw anguish as the inevitable lot of man after the loss of religious faith. The most comprehensive analysis of Absurdity is given by Albert Camus in a collection of essays entitled The Myth of Sisyphus, first published in 1942. Camus' explicit aim is not to give "a definition, but rather an enumeration of the feelings that may admit of the absurd" and to seek an answer to the question whether, seeing the overwhelming absurdity of human existence, one should commit suicide or not. The feeling of absurdity may spring from various sources: our lives are often mechanical, and "Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life"; man "belongs to time and, by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy"; man is placed in an alien, inhuman world, which may appear characterized by "strangeness" and "denseness" and in which "men too, secrete the inhuman"; true knowledge is impossible: "With the exception of professional rationalists, to-day people despair of true knowledge".
Camus' exposition is by no means free of contradiction, and his failure to use the term 'absurd' without inconsistencies has left some critics dissatisfied. The passages in *The Myth of Sisyphus* in which Camus explicitly elucidates his concept of Absurdity include the following:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and light, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (p. 13)

I said that the world is absurd, but I was too hasty. This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. (p. 24)

- the feeling of absurdity does not spring from the mere scrutiny of a fact or an impression but... it bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation. (p. 30)

The absurd is sin without God. (p. 38)
The absurd is lucid reason noting its limits. (p. 44)

Incongruity between man's universe and his expectations is obviously implicit in Camus' concept of the absurd and Martin Esslin is right in concluding that in Camus' usage the word has the dictionary meaning 'out of harmony with reason and propriety', 'incongruous, unreasonable, illogical' rather than the meaning 'ridiculous' suggested by common usage. Camus himself is more concerned with the consequences of Absurdity than with terminological distinctions, and his answer to Absurdity is not suicide but free-
dom, passion and revolt. He also makes it clear that the philosophy of the absurd is nothing new:

Let me repeat: all this has been said over and over. I am limiting myself here to making a rapid classification and to pointing out these obvious themes. They run through all literatures and all philosophies. Everyday conversation feeds on them. There is no question of reinventing them. (The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 20)

Given such a wide applicability of the term it is not surprising that novelists as far apart as Malraux, whose solution is action, and Hemingway with his peculiar code of pride and defiance and playwrights such as the surrealist Apollinaire and the realist Pinter have all been mentioned in connection with absurdism.

The Theatre of the Absurd

The Theatre of the Absurd, as defined by Martin Esslin, primarily includes the playwrights of what Arnold P. Hinchcliffe calls the School of Paris, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet. As is well known, Genet is the only Frenchman out of the four, Adamov being a Russian of Armenian origin, Ionesco Rumanian and Beckett Irish. In his book Martin Esslin also presents a number of absurd dramatists in other European countries, such as Günter Grass in Germany, Fernando Arrabal in Spain (now living in France) and Slawomir Mrozek in Poland. Among American playwrights Martin Esslin mentions, for instance, Edward Albee, Jack Gelber and Arthur Kopit. The two English playwrights included in Martin Esslin's presentation are Harold Pinter and N.F. Simpson; to this list later critics have added David Campton and, in regard to some of his work, Tom Stoppard. The list could be completed with names like James Saunders, David Perry and Johnny Speight, whose work has clear affinities with absurdism.
It appears from Martin Esslin's presentation that the Theatre of the Absurd, though an international phenomenon, is very strongly represented by the French avant-garde from the 1920's onwards. So Martin Esslin finds it necessary to emphasize the difference between the Theatre of the Absurd and the Existentialist theatre of Sartre and the work of playwrights such as Giraudoux, Anouilh and Camus on one hand and the poetic avant-garde theatre of dramatists such as Michel de Ghelderode, Jacques Audiberti and Georges Schehadé on the other. He compares a well-made play to absurd plays as follows:

If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerism of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings.15

The basic difference between the Theatre of the Absurd and the theatre of such playwrights as Sartre, Camus, Giraudoux and Anouilh is that whilst the Theatre of the Absurd, to express the senselessness of the human condition, abandons the use of rational devices and discursive thought, the latter adheres to the tradition of the well-made play employing highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning and characters who remain wholly consistent.16 The dividing line between the Theatre of the Absurd and what Martin Esslin calls the poetic avant-garde theatre is, as he admits, more difficult to draw. Basically the latter is "more lyrical, and far less violent and grotesque". More significantly, the two
types of theatre have different attitudes towards language: the Theatre of the Absurd "tends toward a radical devaluation of language, toward a poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself" while the poetic avant-garde exploits consciously "poetic" speech.

In a chapter entitled "The Significance of the Absurd" (chapter seven in *The Theatre of the Absurd*) Martin Esslin elucidates what is characteristic of absurd plays. The absurd drama, he argues, reflects man's tragic sense of loss at the disappearance of the comforting certainties of generally known and universally accepted metaphysical systems. However, concerned as it is with the ultimate realities of the human condition, the relatively few fundamental problems of life and death, isolation and communication, the Theatre of the Absurd, however grotesque, frivolous, and irreverent it may appear, represents a return to the original, religious function of the theatre - the confrontation of man with the spheres of myth and religious reality. (p. 353)

One of its aspects is satire; it castigates "the absurdity of lives lived unaware and unconscious of ultimate reality" and "the deadness and mechanical senselessness of half-conscious lives" (p. 351). Its more positive aspect is making people aware of "man's precarious and mysterious position in the universe" (p. 353). Not concerned with ideological propositions, or the representation of events or the fate or adventures of characters, but being rather one poet's intuition of the human condition, his "descent into the depths of his personality, his dreams, fantasies and nightmares" (p. 353), the Theatre of the Absurd is "a theatre of situation as against a theatre of events in sequence" (p. 354). It abandons psychology, subtlety of characterization and plot in the conventional sense. Unlike the Brechtian epic theatre it does not aim at expanding
the range of drama by introducing narrative, epic elements, but aims at concentration and depth; nor does it try to communicate some moral or social lesson, but gives the poetic element in drama an incomparably greater role. An absurd play is analogous to a Symbolist or Imagist poem in that it presents a poetic image or a pattern of images, and "expressing an intuition in depth it should ideally be apprehended in a single moment" (p. 355) and not be spread over a period of time on the stage. The Theatre of the Absurd reflects the modern trend towards the devaluation of language, which characterizes not only contemporary poetry and philosophical thought but also modern mathematics and natural sciences. In the flood of mass communication, in advertising and politics the gap between reality and language has shaken man's belief in language as a means of communication, and growing specialization is becoming an obstacle in the exchange of ideas between people representing different spheres of life. Thus communication between human beings is, appropriately, often shown in a state of break-down in absurd drama. As the motives and actions of the characters in an absurd play are incomprehensible, the audience finds the characters inevitably comic and cannot identify with them; thus it is, paradoxically, in the Theatre of the Absurd that the Alienation Effect sought by Brechtian theatre is best attained. But unlike Brechtian theatre, the Theatre of the Absurd does not appeal to the audience's critical, intellectual faculties, but operates at a deeper level, activating psychological forces and releasing hidden fears and repressed aggressions. In a schizophrenic world, which exhibits side by side a large number of unreconcilable beliefs and attitudes, the Theatre of the Absurd has a therapeutic effect; as the audience is confronted with a heightened picture of disintegration, it has either to reject it or to make an effort
at interpretation and integration, and "by being made to see that the world has become absurd, in acknowledging that fact [the audience] takes the first step in coming to terms with reality" (p. 363). The "humour noir" of the Theatre of the Absurd is liberating: "It is the unease caused by the presence of illusions that are obviously out of tune with reality that is dissolved and discharged through liberating laughter at the recognition of the fundamental absurdity of the universe" (p. 364). The structure of absurd plays is often circular or otherwise presents a growing intensification of the initial situation. Dramatic suspense in an absurd play is of a nature radically different from that in conventional plays; instead of being given a solution which proceeds from a neat exposition the spectator is challenged to ask questions about the meaning of the play. All in all Martin Esslin sees the "language of stage images that embody a truth beyond the power of mere discursive thought" (p. 367) as the central element in the Theatre of the Absurd.

The tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd is, according to Martin Esslin, wide and varied. While admitting that Hermann Reich's attempt at tracing a direct line of succession from the Latin mimus through medieval mystery plays and Shakespeare's clowns to the Italian commedia dell'arte has been discredited, Martin Esslin, however, strongly emphasizes the inner connection between all these categories (p. 284) and adds to the tradition, among other forms of comedy, the English harlequinade and music-hall and the American vaudeville and silent film comedy, all of which have had a definite influence on absurd drama. Martin Esslin's account includes the two bestknown forerunners of the Theatre of the Absurd, Georg Büchner and Alfred Jarry, further the Dadaists and Surrealists of the nineteen
twenties and thirties, Expressionists (e.g., August Strindberg's expressionistic phase) and early Brecht. According to Martin Esslin, the antecedents of absurd drama also include nonsense literature and, perhaps most important of all, Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, *le théâtre de la cruauté*.

Martin Esslin's hypothesis has not passed without criticism. The above brief outline may already have illustrated the relative importance accorded by Esslin to what has been called "a brief vogue" by Charles Marowitz.  

Kenneth Tynan was bitingly critical:

> when Mr Esslin ropes in Shakespeare, Goethe, and Ibsen as harbingers of the Absurd, one begins to feel that the whole history of dramatic literature has been nothing but a prelude to the glorious emergence of Beckett and Ionesco.

Esslin's hypothesis was also undermined by the fact that critics did not always agree on what playwrights should be included among Absurdists. A case in point is Genet, whom Robert Brustein wanted to exclude.

It is also clear that not all absurd plays conform to the pattern set by Esslin or have the deep significance he attributed to them. Esslin found it necessary to clarify his position later on as can be seen from the introduction to the second edition of *The Theatre of the Absurd*. In his introduction to *Absurd Drama* Esslin wrote:

> A term like the Theatre of the Absurd must therefore be understood as a kind of intellectual shorthand for a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method, and connection, of shared philosophical and artistic premises, whether conscious or subconscious, and of influence from a common store of tradition. A label of this kind therefore is an aid to understanding, valid only in so far as it helps to gain insight into a work of art. It is not a binding classification; it is certainly not all-embracing or exclusive. A play may contain some elements that can best be understood in the light of such a label, while other
elements in the same play derive from and can best be understood in the light of a different convention.  

Perhaps the lowest common denominator of absurd plays is that, to a varying degree, they run counter to the tradition of the well-made play and that, some in subtler and more equivocal ways than others, they subscribe to the overall philosophy of the absurd. The philosophy of the absurd has, naturally, also been criticized and belittled. J. Chiari, for instance, calls it "an historical and changing notion", which in a world where the majority of people profess religious beliefs is "obviously untenable". Since the publication of The Myth of Sisyphus there has been awareness, however, that some writers, consciously or unconsciously, exhibit absurdist traits in their work.

Tom Stoppard and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

The subject of this study is Tom Stoppard's play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. As the details of Tom Stoppard's career have by now been made public in several other contexts, only a brief outline will be given here. During the last two decades he has established his reputation as one of the most popular and prolific playwrights in England. He was born Thomas Straussler in Czechoslovakia in 1937, and before 1945, when his widowed mother (Tom Stoppard's father, Doctor Straussler, died in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp) married an Englishman and the family moved to England, his early childhood years were spent in Singapore and India. He was educated at a minor public school and at seventeen he was employed as a reporter covering local events by a Bristol morning paper. His career in journalism included work as a second string drama critic for a Bristol evening paper
and from 1960 onwards as a free-lance and as drama critic for a short-lived periodical, called Scene, in London. He failed to secure employment in Fleet Street and turned to writing short stories and radio and TV plays. His early work includes, besides two stage plays and some radio plays, a surrealistic novel, Lord Malquist and Mr Moon. It was not the novel, as Stoppard had expected, but the play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead that made his early reputation. Since then Stoppard has written around twenty television, radio or stage plays. He has also adapted several plays by foreign playwrights for the English stage. 24

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead started as a one-act verse burlesque called Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear, which Stoppard wrote during a five-month colloquium for talented young playwrights, financed by the Ford Foundation in Berlin in the summer of 1964. The original idea had been suggested by Stoppard's agent, Kenneth Ewing. The first version was not favourably received. 25 A twenty-minute segment, called Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, was produced, directed by Stoppard, by Questors Theatre at Ealing in October, 1964, and during the same month Stoppard started writing a new version, not in verse and not set in England as the original burlesque, but within a framework of Hamlet. The Royal Shakespeare Company heard about the play and took out a year's option on the first two completed acts and commissioned Stoppard to write the third act. When the year's option ran out with no prospect of the Royal Shakespeare Company producing the play, Stoppard contacted the Oxford Playhouse, and the play was eventually passed on to the university group called the Oxford Theatre Group. The group presented a revised version of the play, now bearing the title Rosencrantz and Guilden-
stern Are Dead, on the fringe of the Edinburgh Festival in August, 1966. The play was an extra-
ordinary critical success. It aroused the interest
of Kenneth Tynan at the National Theatre, where, in
its final form, it was first produced in April, 1967. Since then it has been successfully staged both in
England and the United States as well as in many
other countries.

As a Shakespearean parody R&G was nothing new. A
glance through the bibliography of the New Variorum
dition of Hamlet already reveals that Hamlet has
provided material for parodists on more than one
occasion, and Hamlet parodies are by no means re-
stricted to those listed there. In his Rosencrantz
and Guildensterne, written towards the end of the
nineteenth century, W.S. Gilbert made Ophelia speak
in phrases that seem to anticipate Stoppard:

Well, there again
Opinion is divided. Some men hold
That he's the sanest, far, of all sane men -
Some that he's really sane, but shamming
mad -
Some that he's really mad, but shamming
sane -
Some that he will be mad, some that he was -
Some that he couldn't be. But on the whole
(As far as I can make out what they mean)
The favourite theory's somewhat like this:
Hamlet is idiotically sane
With lucid intervals of lunacy.

At the time Stoppard wrote his play the idea of making
the two attendant lords, instead of Hamlet, the heroes,
or, as it turned out the anti-heroes of the play seemed
particularly appropriate. Critics recall that as
early as 1917 T.S. Eliot wrote in "The Love Song of
J. Alfred Prufrock" the following lines:

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant
to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous —  
Almost, at times, the fool.

The idea of creating an extra-textual existence outside *Hamlet* for the two attendants was greeted as brilliant. It was also perceived that the way Stoppard imbued Shakespearean characters with life was different; John Russell Taylor wrote that instead of speculations similar to those concerning the nature of King Lear's wife, the number of children Lady Macbeth had etc., "the whole point of his play is to reinforce the strict classical viewpoint that dramatic characters do not have any independent, continuing existence beyond the confines of what their inventor chooses to tell us about them".30

The fact that the two anti-heroes have hazy, or almost non-existent memories of their past identity led John Weightman to connect them with Existentialism; on the whole, however, he finds the existential theme unconvincingly executed and only admits the possibility of calling the two characters "near-Existentialist heroes".31 Stoppard himself has denied even having known what the word 'existential' meant until it was applied to his play, even if, according to him, the play could be interpreted in existential terms. His explanation for the success of the play was that it had "the right combination of specificity and vague generality which was interesting at that time to — eight out of ten playwrights".32

The play's affinities with the Theatre of the Absurd, and especially Stoppard's indebtedness to Beckett, were noted from the first. The general consensus seemed to be that Stoppard's play was a derivative of Beckett's play and its thematic import less weighty than in Beckett. Some later critics like Arnold P. Hinchliffe were dismissive:

as the play opens we recognize Theatre of the Absurd. What remains then, is, to what
Most critics, however have paid tribute to the complexity of the play, the inventiveness of the playwright and his masterly use of language. Anthony Callen ends his longish essay on Stoppard with the following assessment:

it is one of the best plays written by the new generation of English playwrights which has absorbed with such success a valuable lesson in dramaturgy from its contact with the European tradition.\textsuperscript{34}

The Structure of the Present Study and the Method Employed

As might be appropriate in endeavours concerning absurd drama, the worst enemy of this study has been time. The study was first begun in 1978, and since then I have become acquainted with studies incorporating aspects which were originally planned to be part of my thesis, and as years go by more and more dissertations on Stoppard's work are being published. One such study is David Bratt's \textit{The Ironic Muse of Tom Stoppard}, which I first came across in California in 1979-80.\textsuperscript{35} When writing the chapter on parody I found it necessary to take David Bratt's dissertation into account. Otherwise the following guidelines concerning the structure of the study and the method employed were adopted:

First, Stoppard being a living playwright any attempt to make a definitive evaluation of his work has only transient value. As most studies on Stoppard to date treat together several of his plays written so far it was decided to make only one play, \textit{R&G}, the almost sole object of the study. The narrow focus will, I hope, allow greater depth.
Second, R&G is an absurd play based on *Hamlet*. The ultimate aim of the study is to help clarify the relation of the play to *Hamlet* on one hand and its relation to absurd drama on the other. The plays chosen to represent absurd drama are mainly Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. The study could be classified as loosely comparative.

Third, as Stoppard has often been commended as a master craftsman of language, the emphasis is on the language of the play. One of the aspects of language brought into discussion is the use of ready-made and cliché-ridden language in absurd drama (the term stereotypy will be later used and defined). The reason why this aspect was considered important was that Martin Esslin, among others who will be mentioned later on in this study, has commented on the use of cliché-ridden language by Absurdists. Another aspect discussed is deviations from stereotyped expressions which can be seen both in Stoppard and Beckett and, to some extent, in Shakespeare's proverbs in *Hamlet*. Punning, being an important characteristic of Stoppard and Beckett and, above all, Shakespeare, is also included. Some aspects also included, such as certain ambiguities, comic deflation and parody, are best classified as structural.

Fourth, in spite of the concern with language the study is not of a linguistic, but of a stylistic nature. This is an important qualification especially as it applies to the first chapter. Critical vocabulary contains words such as cliché-ridden, platitudinous, stereotype, everyday, commonplace, which are freely used by critics and seldom questioned. It has been assumed here that it is permissible to make observations, on a modest scale, of style concerning such concepts even if it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a strict linguistic descrip-
tion of them with an adequate theoretical basis. Such a linguistic description, if it were ever regarded as an interesting or even feasible enough undertaking, is best left to purely linguistic studies. It is sobering in this context to recall that in 1969 David Crystal and Derek Davy wrote that much of stylistic analysis to date is suspect much because "the categories which have been set up to account for the features, or sets of features, in the language data are frequently inconsistently used, are incomplete, and usually have no adequate formal basis". The most that is hoped for in the first chapter is some cautious generalizations.

The material in the study has been divided into chapters as follows:

Chapter I begins with what appears a long detour into two absurd plays not written by Stoppard, namely, with a discussion of cliché-type language in Harold Pinter's The Caretaker and Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot, followed by an assessment of the same phenomenon in Stoppard's R&G. Chapter II takes up a feature which is typical of Stoppard's humour, namely, deviations from what are called stereotyped expressions in this study. Chapter III is another detour, this time into Hamlet, discussing one potentially stereotyped aspect of the play, proverbs, and the changes Shakespeare introduces into them. Besides the fact that one aim of this study is to draw parallels between Hamlet and R&G, the reason for including a more detailed discussion of some aspects of Hamlet - aspects that tie up with the topics within the study - is that some critics have gone to the length of calling Stoppard "an heir to Shakespeare". In chapter IV punning in Hamlet and R&G is discussed. Chapter V takes up some parallels between R&G and WFG in the use of three techniques, namely, flawed communication, playful treatment of sentence elements and sentence sequence and finally,
the technique of frustrated expectations and deflation. Chapter VI treats parody in *Hamlet* and *R&G* and chapter VII two *Hamlet* motives, madness and death, in *R&G*. The Appendix contains excerpts of equal length from the three absurd plays and similar excerpts from two plays, generally regarded as non-absurd, namely, *Inadmissible Evidence* by John Osborne and *The Waters of Babylon* by John Arden. The purpose is to show how the sampling of stereotyped expressions has been done in practice. The bulk of the material is naturally too small to allow any definite conclusions to be drawn as to the frequency of such expressions in absurd and non-absurd drama respectively. The two non-absurd playwrights were chosen at random, with no preconceived ideas about their use of stereotyped language. The only condition, besides being non-absurd, the two plays had to fulfill was that they represent post-1956 drama, the first performance of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* that year being regarded by most critics as a kind of watershed in modern English drama.

Notes to the Introduction


5 Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. X.

6 Hinchliffe, *The Absurd*, p. VII.

18 Camus, p. 18.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., p. 19.
21 Ibid., p. 22.
23 Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 5.
24 Hinchliffe, The Absurd, p. 54.
26 Ibid., p. 6.
27 Ibid., p. 7.
34 Stoppard's early work includes the television play, A Walk on the Water, an adaptation of a stage play, later entitled Enter a Free Man, and The Gamblers, produced by the Drama Department of Bristol University. Among Stoppard's hits are Jumpers (London, 1972), a futuristic prank which has as its main character a moral philosopher, and Travesties (London, 1975), a literary parody bringing together James Joyce, Tristan Tzara, the Dadaist, and Lenin, who all happened to live in Zurich at one time during the First World War. Stoppard's interest in human rights and his involvement in the work of Amnesty International is reflected in some plays, e.g., Every Good Boy Deserves Favour (London, 1978), which is set in a Soviet mental hospital, and Professional Foul (London, 1978), which centres on the Czech dissident movement. In Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth (London, 1979) Stoppard invents a new language as a kind of language game;
the second half of the play, however, which again focuses on the plight of dissidents in Czecho-
slovakia is in a rather sombre mode. Of Stoppard's plays Night and Day (London, 1978), which is about western journalists reporting from an African country on the verge of a civil war and about conflicting views on journalistic freedom, is perhaps the most obviously "straight" one, i.e., it has no affinities with the Theatre of the Absurd.


27 The references in the study will be to the final form of the play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (London, 1967), which from now on will be referred to as R&G.


29 See, e.g., Hayman, Tom Stoppard, p. 33.


33 Hinchliffe, British Theatre 1950-70, p. 141.


35 David Bratt, "The Ironic Muse of Tom Stoppard" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1976).


CHAPTER I

STEREOTYPY IN THE CARETAKER, WAITING FOR GODOT AND ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

The Cliché and Stereotypy

As was pointed out in the Introduction, critics have occasionally commented on the use of the cliché by absurd playwrights. Detailed studies of the matter are found in at least two academic dissertations, those by Niklaus Gessner and Per-Olof Hagberg. In his thesis, entitled Die Unzulänglichkeit der Sprache, Niklaus Gessner has studied the disintegration of language ("der Untergang des sprachlichen Ausdrucks") in Beckett, listing ten linguistic phenomena, including the cliché, typical of Beckett's style. Per-Olof Hagberg's comparative analysis of main themes and dramatic technique in Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter echoes Gessner's findings, emphasizing the cliché-ridden stereotypy of language both in Pinter and Beckett. Hagberg sees the cliché as an essential part of everyday language: "Pinter's plays are, to a great extent, an exploration of everyday speech and an exploitation of its dramatic values. Since, however, colloquial language consists mainly of clichés, these must also be an important part of Pinter's dialogue." Hagberg admits that "Beckett's plays are not in the same way records of everyday dialogue", adding, however, that "nevertheless he frequently uses stereotyped phrases as a means of expression." The above quotations may already illustrate some of the difficulties inherent in every attempt to describe the language used by a writer or a playwright. What is
"everyday speech"? What is a cliché or a stereotyped phrase, or are the two terms in most cases interchangeable? To give a full stylistic description of "everyday speech" would entail an analysis of the text's phonological, grammatical and lexical aspects at an adequate level of delicacy as exemplified by David Crystal and Derek Davy in Investigating English Style. Such an analysis, however, would not necessarily throw into sharper relief the most significant features of an author's style than impressionistic assertions based on intuitive "hunches". Even without a full-scale grammatical analysis of the language used by absurd playwrights one banal conclusion is clear: the language in The Caretaker, WFG and R&G is written dialogue meant to be spoken on the stage, and is by no means characterized by such a high frequency of false starts, hesitations, unfinished sentences and faulty grammar as "everyday speech", which can leave a tremendous amount of information simply to be inferred from the context of situation. It is also clear that "everyday speech" can accommodate a large variety of registers and styles, which is not always the case within a single play; on the contrary, it might be possible to find evidence of pronounced stylistic uniformity in a large number of plays.

To argue the point whether "everyday speech" consists mainly of clichés or not would necessitate finding a valid definition for the concept cliché. Eric Partridge, the compiler of a much-used dictionary of clichés, has obviously devoted much thought to the matter. Quoting the OED definition, "a stereotyped expression, a commonplace phrase", he enlarges upon his view as follows: "A cliché is an outworn commonplace; a phrase, a short sentence, that has become so hackneyed that careful speakers and scrupulous writers shrink from it because they feel that its use is an insult to the intelligence of their audience or
from flyblown phrases ('much of a muchness'; 'to all intents and purposes'), metaphors that are now pointless ('lock, stock and barrel'), formulas that have become mere counters ('far be it from me to...') - through sobriquets that have lost all their freshness and most of their significance ('The Iron Duke') - to quotations that are nauseating ('cups that cheer but not inebriate'), and foreign phrases that are tags ('longo intervallo', 'bête noire').

Partridge further divides clichés into the following categories: idioms that have become clichés; other hackneyed phrases; stock phrases and familiar quotations from foreign languages; quotations from English literature. Since a large number of idioms are metaphors, metaphors abound among clichés. On the other hand, Partridge admits only the most hackneyed proverbs; according to him, "proverbs are instances of racial wisdom, whereas clichés are instances of racial inanition". Many Shakespeare quotations which once had a rare concentrated semantic power have, over the centuries, become clichés, a fate shared by some passages from Milton and other luminaries of English and foreign literature. According to Partridge, an overwhelming majority of clichés, however, come under the heading idioms and phrases.

The spectrum provided by Partridge's definition appears to be a wide one; however, its application can yield unexpected results: the first ten pages of The Caretaker contain only two clichés listed, in a slightly different form, in Partridge's A Dictionary of Clichés ("You see what I mean", p.8; "It's life and death to me", p.13), and the total number of such clichés in The Caretaker is not more than ten. A cursory survey of the contents of Partridge's dictionary is apt to establish the fact that his chosen samples are to a large extent of the kind not likely to be
encountered in Pinter's dialogue. Some are scholarly ("to cross the Rubicon") or biblical ("feet of clay"), and the high number of literary allusions ("fresh fields and pastures new") brings to mind the OED quotation that "the command of cliché comes of having had a literary training".\(^6\) Pinter's dialogue in The Caretaker has no room for embellishments of the kind such clichés represent. One must draw the conclusion that either the stereotypy that undeniably characterizes the dialogue in The Caretaker does not consist in an exaggerated use of clichés as these are labelled by Partridge, or that the numerous stereotyped sequences of language in The Caretaker are altogether too trivial to be listed in a dictionary of clichés.

A sociologist's definition of the cliché is given by Anton C. Zijderveld in his treatise On Clichés, The Supersedure of Meaning by Function in Modernity.\(^7\)

According to Zijderveld, the cliché is not exclusively a linguistic phenomenon, even if it is so primarily:

A cliché is a traditional form of human expression (in words, thoughts, emotions, gestures, acts) which - due to repetitive use in social life - has lost its original, often ingenious heuristic power. Although it thus fails positively to contribute meaning to social interactions and communication, it does function socially, since it manages to stimulate behaviour (cognition, emotion, volition, action), while it avoids reflection on meaning. Summary: The sociological essence of a cliché consists of the supersedure of original meanings by social functions. This supersedure is caused by repetitive use and enhanced by the avoidance of reflection.\(^8\)

The two key concepts, meaning and function, are further defined by Zijderveld as follows: "Meaning is that quality in human interactions which enables a participant, as well as an observer, to not only cognitively and emotively follow the interaction and
participate in it, but to also predict and understand the next few stages of the further development of the interaction.\(^9\) "Function is that quality in human interaction which enables an actor to realize a certain course of action, according to the stimulus received from an interaction partner, and independent of any cognitive and emotive internalization of roles or attitudes on the part of the actor.\(^10\) As is revealed by the title of the treatise, Zijderveld sees the cliché as typical of "modernity", i.e., an era characterized by such processes as industrialization, urbanization, secularization and the rise of capitalism and bureaucracy, which have brought with them free-floating values, norms and motives. He regards modern society as a "clichégenic" society, in which old meanings, provided by religion for instance, have been replaced by social functionality. Among linguistic clichés Zijderveld counts traditional expressions which were originally containers of old experiences and the wisdom of past generations, exemplified by proverbs and Shakespeare quotations, Fowler's "associated reflexes"\(^11\) such as "blissful ignorance", "cherished beliefs", "dim, religious light", etc., socio-political catchwords and slogans like "God-given right", "freedom", "United we stand, divided we fall", which have degenerated into clichés and semantically thin interjections and vocal gestures like "you know", which are only used to bring about consensus between the speaker and the person addressed, the original meaning being irrelevant. The social functions of clichés are, according to Zijderveld, manifold. The bulk of clichés are convenient counters which facilitate the conducting of daily interactions without much cognitive or emotive energy; some are used in situations of embarrassment and precariousness; some are survivals of magic used for exercising power over nature. Political clichés have the shifting functions of mobilization, propaganda and social control. According to Zijderveld almost any expression, once
26

fresh and semantically meaningful, can ultimately develop into a cliché.

If we accept Zijderveld's analysis, clichés would tend to be ubiquitous. Nevertheless, it is incorrect to say that Zijderveld would want every sequence of language that gives the impression of stereotypy to be called a cliché. It seems that stereotyped sequences of language are far too numerous to be all covered by one single term, the term cliché. It might be that stereotypy is an inherent property of all language, there being a kind of continuum between complete stereotypy at one extreme and fully free, creative language at the other. The pole of fully free, creative language would probably exist only as a theoretical possibility. It is possible to find support for the view that the human mind tends to store larger units than just individual words. Basing his views on the findings of neurophysiology Peter Ladefoged, for instance, argues for memory operating with large, "unalterable chunks": "instead of storing a small number of primitives and organizing them in terms of a (relatively) large number of rules, we store a large number of complex items which we manipulate with comparatively simple operations". Dwight Bolinger writes that "our language does not expect us to build everything starting with lumber, nails, and blueprint. Instead it provides us with an incredibly large number of prefabs, which have the magical property of persisting even when we knock some of them apart and put them together in unpredictable ways", and further that "the human mind is less remarkable for its creativity than for the fact that it remembers everything". He also asks, "may there not be some degree of unfreedom in every syntactic combination that is not random?" The above strongly advocates the view that language is a phenomenon which is inherently stereotype.
A workable definition of stereotypy might best be found by taking into account the psychological dimensions of stereotypy, i.e., the impressions and reactions of the receptor in a communication act. When meeting in the morning, for the first time that day, and hearing the word "good", it is reasonable to expect that the following word will be "morning". So stereotypy produces a high degree of predictability. At the other end of the communication act, after having heard "good morning", the receptor is left with an experience of déjá vu: he has probably heard an identical phrase on countless occasions before. Both these dimensions of stereotypy, predictability and the experience of déjá vu, presumably vary greatly from person to person, making all studies of stereotypy without the help of sizeable reference groups more or less subjective. Such studies might, nonetheless, have something to contribute in the field of stylistics.

In the present study the term stereotypy serves to refer to syntactic combinations of more than one word (except in the case of one-word clichés) which, to a varying degree, bring into play predictability and déjá vu. Such syntactic combinations include, besides clichés, set idioms and phrases, also sentences and collocations. The terms idiom, phrase and collocation have the denotations given to them in Dictionary of Language and Linguistics by R.R.K. Hartmann and F.C. Stork. Thus an idiom is "a group of words which has a special connotation not usually equal to the sum of the meanings of the individual words, and which usually cannot be translated literally into another language without the special meaning being lost". A phrase is "a group of words forming a syntactic unit which is not a complete sentence, i.e. it does not have a subject or predicate". Collocation refers to "two or more words, considered as individual lexical items, used in habitual association with one another in a
given language, e.g. in English green collocates with grass, dark with night, etc". The use of the word cliché is mainly restricted to cases which can be found in Eric Partridge's A Dictionary of Clichés, but Zijderveld's analysis has also influenced the application of the term in this study. The prevalence of phrases, idioms and sentences from two further dictionaries, A Dictionary of Catch Phrases by Erik Partridge and Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, has also been studied in R&G and the two plays chosen to represent absurd drama, namely The Caretaker by Harold Pinter and WFG by Samuel Beckett. 17

The question naturally arises whether stereotypy is more pronounced in absurd plays than in plays in general. Some absurd plays no doubt give a heightened impression of stereotypy. One could cite the play Dog Accident by James Saunders (another playwright with clear absurd tendencies), which is a 25-minute exchange of stereotyped sentences in a potentially embarrassing and precarious situation, namely, when one has to face the suffering and death of animals. But one cannot deny the possibility of there existing non-absurd plays of similarly heightened stereotypy. To demonstrate that there is a higher-than-average degree of stereotypy in absurd plays would necessitate the use of quantitative methods and a large bulk of material, which has not been the case here. The only attempt to illustrate the use of stereotyped sequences of language in the three absurd plays as compared to two non-absurd plays, namely Inadmissible Evidence by John Osborne and The Waters of Babylon by John Arden, has been made in the Appendix, where what have been called ready-made sentences in the present study have been counted in selected passages. Otherwise the aim has been to find some basic patterns of stereotypy in Pinter and Beckett respectively, and to point out some similarities and differences between these and
the methods used by Stoppard. To establish a kind of norm against which Stoppard's usage can be seen more clearly, some material from The Caretaker and WFG will be taken up first. Since the English translations of Ionesco's plays do not bear the authorial stamp in the same way as those of Beckett's plays do, references to Ionesco are only occasional. The same applies to N.F. Simpson, who is one of the minor absurd playwrights.

The Caretaker

As was concluded in the previous section the assertion that the dialogue in The Caretaker mainly consists of clichés is untenable if we limit the use of the term cliché to cases illustrated by Eric Partridge. However, the impression The Caretaker creates is undeniably one of stereotypy, and for the purpose of illustrating some of its constituents an excerpt from the first scene, Act One, is quoted below:

ASTON. Sit down.

DAVIES. Thanks. (Looking about.) Uuh...

ASTON. Just a minute.

ASTON looks around for a chair, sees one lying on its side by the rolled carpet at the fireplace, and starts to get it out.

DAVIES. Sit down? Huh... I haven't had a good sit down... I haven't had a proper sit down... well, I couldn't tell you...

ASTON (placing the chair). Here you are.

DAVIES. Ten minutes off for a tea-break in the middle of the night in that place and I couldn't find a seat, not one. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had it. And they had me working there... they had me working...

ASTON sits on the bed, takes out a tobacco tin and papers, and begins to roll himself a cigarette. DAVIES watches him.

All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt. When he come at me tonight I told him.
Pause.

ASTON. Take a seat.

DAVIES. Yes, but what I got to do first, you see, what I got to do, I got to loosen myself up, you see what I mean? I could have got done in down there.

DAVIES exclaims loudly, punches downward with closed fist, turns his back to ASTON and stares at the wall.

Pause. ASTON lights a cigarette.

ASTON. You want to roll yourself one of these?

DAVIES (turning). What? No, no, I never smoke a cigarette. (Pause. He comes forward.) I'll tell you what, though. I'll have a bit of that tobacco there for my pipe, if you like.

ASTON (handing him the tin). Yes. Go on. Take some out of that.

DAVIES. That's kind of you, mister. Just enough to fill my pipe, that's all. (He takes a pipe from his pocket and fills it.) I had a tin, only... only a while ago. But it was knocked off. It was knocked off on the Great West Road. (He holds out the tin). Where shall I put it?

ASTON. I'll take it.

DAVIES (handing the tin). When he come at me tonight I told him. Didn't I? You heard me tell him, didn't you? (pp. 7-8)

Repetition in The Caretaker

One of the most striking features in the passage is the many repetitions in Davies's speech. These repetitions follow different patterns. Slight variations, e.g., in the order of the items may be introduced, as in "All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them", which becomes "All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them". Something may be left out, as in "but what I got to do first", which becomes "what I got to do", or something may be added, as in "But it was knocked off", which gives "It was knocked off on the Great West Road". Some sentences are repeated in their identical
form, e.g., "When he came at me tonight I told him", the repetition being at some distance from the original.

Could repetitions of this kind contribute to stereotypy in a dialogue? No doubt there is predictability; at the onset of each repeated sequence the reader or the hearer can anticipate what is to follow; he can almost guess his way from one word to the next. An experience of *déjà vu* is also a natural consequence. But on the other hand it has to be admitted that stereotypy in this case may be superficial as the repeated sequences as such are not necessarily stereotyped sentences or phrases. It is true that some of the repeated sequences - taken either as a whole or in part - in the quoted passage seem stereotyped even if they are not listed in the three dictionaries used in this study, namely, Partridge's *A Dictionary of Clichés*, *A Dictionary of Catch Phrases* and *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. Clauses like "I told him" and "What I got to do" are cases in point. They occur frequently in everyday language and are completely unoriginal in the sense that, to quote Geoffrey N. Leech, their use involves only one's memory, not one's "skill to invent new combinations of elements"; moreover, they consist of high-frequency words. Such expressions are called in this study ready-made sentences or clauses. Some of Pinter's repetitions in *The Caretaker* involve such ready-made expressions, others do not. But as repetition is one of the most conspicuous devices used in *The Caretaker* it seems safe to assume that excessive repetition creates an impression of stereotypy even where the repeated sequences are not themselves stereotyped or ready-made.

It may even be possible to reverse the argument and point out cases where Pinter uses repetition to escape stereotypy. The original sentence may contain
some recognizable element of a set idiom or phrase, as, e.g., "I've had dinner with the best" (p. 9). When Davies repeats the sentence, after a longish speech, it takes the form "I've eaten my dinner off the best of plates", where the original set phrase "do something with the best" has taken an entirely fresh turn. Occasionally Pinter's repetitions resemble a series of musical variations on a theme, the sentences or phrases taking on new forms, underlying ideas remaining constant. The speaker in all the following instances, except the last, is Davies:

He's gone now. Went (p. 13)
they're gone, they're no good, all the good's gone out of them. (p. 15)
Not a bad pair of shoes. - Not a bad shape of shoe. - Good shoe this. (p. 15)
they're no good but at least they're comfortable. Not much cop, but I mean they don't hurt. (p. 16)
Well, I been around, you know...what I mean...
I been about...(p. 25)
some kind of lie must have got around. And this lie went round. (p. 55)

So Pinter's repetitions expel as much stereotypy as they introduce. Even sentences like "He's gone now", "they're no good", which are so often used in everyday dialogue that they could be called ready-made stock sentences, lose some of the linguistic austerity resulting from marked stereotypy because they are linked together with their variant forms. Through repetition Pinter utilizes the subtle speech rhythms of the language as in the following passage, in which Davies's repetitive musings progress step by step:

DAVIES. I got this mate at Stepheir's Bush. In the convenience. Well, he was in the convenience. Run about the best convenience they had. (He watches ASTON). Run about the best one. Always slipped me a bit of soap, any time I went in there. Very good soap. They have to have the best soap. I was never without a piece of soap, whenever I happened
to be knocking about the Shepherd's Bush area. (p. 13)

In the episode in which Davies - having learnt that Mick is Aston's brother - cautiously skirts round the topic of Mick's character, at the same time trying not to reveal too much of his ambivalent feelings towards Mick, the dialogue becomes a series of repetitive variations on the sentence "He's a bit of a joker". Since almost every sentence used is unoriginal and ready-made, the impression of stereotypy is in this case strengthened:

**DAVIES.** Is he? He's a bit of a joker, en'he?

**ASTON.** Uh.

**DAVIES.** Yes...he's a real joker.

**ASTON.** He's got a sense of humour.

**DAVIES.** Yes, I noticed.

Pause.

He's a real joker, that lad, you can see that.

Pause.

**ASTON.** Yes, he tends...he tends to see the funny side of things.

**DAVIES.** Well, he's got a sense of humour, en'he?

**ASTON.** Yes.

**DAVIES.** Yes, you could tell that.

Pause.

I could tell the first time I saw him he had his own way of looking at things. (pp. 39-40)

Like the above piece of dialogue, Pinter's variations often achieve a peculiar kind of humour. That is what happens in the following passage in which Davies tries to assert his "rights":

Davies. - Look here, I said to him, I got my rights. I told him that. I might have been on the road but nobody's got more rights than I have. (p. 10)
All in all the extreme repetitiveness of the dialogue is only partially responsible for the overall impression of stereotypy in the play. The repetitions contain a large measure of variation; the characters are, as it were, circling over a given topic, approaching it through slightly different turns of phrase or sentences which carry an almost identical meaning. This might partly explain the extreme realism and life-like quality of Pinter's dialogue. Only when the repetitions are themselves hackneyed idioms or phrases or ready-made sentences or clauses does the stereotypy become pronounced.

Ready-Made Elements and Idiosyncratic Speech

To what extent Pinter's dialogue in _The Caretaker_ consists of hackneyed idioms and phrases or ready-made sentences or clauses is a question which cannot be answered satisfactorily without recourse to quantitative methods. In note 18 to the present chapter an account is given of Pinter's use of expressions found in the two dictionaries by Partridge and Brewer's _Dictionary or Phrase and Fable_, and it can be seen there that such expressions are not particularly numerous in _The Caretaker_. Ready-made sentences and clauses are dealt with in greater detail in the Appendix. It is possible to note in this context, however, that the excerpt from the beginning of the play already contains a number of sentences which allow very little or no variation of form: "that's what", "you see what I mean" (listed as a cliché by Partridge), "I'll tell you what", "if you like", "That's kind of you", "that's all". Some, like "you see what I mean" and "I'll tell you what", are empty of meaning and are idiosyncratic speech habits, termed "conversational formulas" by Basil Bernstein. The _Caretaker_ contains a large amount of idiosyncratic speech; phrases like "look here" and the unnecessary and repetitive use of expressions like "I said", "I told him", "you know"
are some further examples.

A Working-Class Restricted Code

The excerpt from the beginning of *The Caretaker* further contains a group of expressions which are of crucial importance for Pinter's style in *The Caretaker*, expressions like, "doing me out of a seat", "treating me like dirt", "When he come at me", "I got to loosen myself up", "I could have got done in", "it was knocked off". Most of these are working-class idioms, and such idioms colour the dialogue throughout the play; some further examples are "the guvnor give me the bullet" (p. 10), "he's having a poke around in it", "piss off out of it" (p. 14), "he won't buckle down to the job" (p. 49). The question again arises, do idioms of this kind increase the stereotypy of language? There is a great deal to be said for idioms as such. To quote Logan Pearsall Smith,

> Idioms are little sparks of life and energy in our speech; they are like those substances called vitamins which make our food nourishing and wholesome; diction deprived of idiom - unless, indeed, as with Gibbon and Johnson, its absence is compensated by other qualities - soon becomes tasteless, dull, insipid.21

It might well be that the above working-class idioms, scattered as they are throughout a dialogue that is repetitive and purposely banal to the extreme, add life and spirit to the language. But they are also symptomatic of what lies at the core of stereotypy in *The Caretaker*: the play is a prime example of the use of a working-class restricted code in English playwriting. This is especially true of Davies's speech, but also of Aston's and for the most part Mick's.

A restricted code implies increased predictability at the syntactic level; to quote Basil Bernstein,
In the case of an elaborated code, the speaker will select from a relatively extensive range of alternatives and therefore the probability of predicting the pattern of organizing elements is considerably reduced. In the case of a restricted code the number of these alternatives is often severely limited and the probability of predicting the pattern is greatly increased.22

Except in the case of the pure form of a restricted code, such as ritualistic modes of communication, prediction "is possible only at the structural level. The lexicon will vary from one case to another, but in all cases [of a restricted code] it is drawn from a narrow range".23 As befits a restricted code, the topics in _The Caretaker_ are trite and limited with the consequent narrow range of vocabulary. Since it is predictable at the syntactic level and limited in its lexis, the dialogue creates an overall impression of stereotypy.

**Collocational Conventionality**

The rigid and limited use of adjectives is another predictable feature in _The Caretaker_. The excerpt which served as a sample of Pinter's language, taken from the beginning of the play, contains two adjective-noun collocations. As it turns out, these collocations are a reliable guide as to the nature of such collocations in _The Caretaker_. "A good sit down" becomes "a proper sit down" in one of Davies's repetitions; both adjectives have a high-rate of co-occurrence with the noun 'sit down', especially in the code used, so the change produces no collocational surprise. Changes in repeated sequences follow the same pattern throughout the play; the adjectives chosen are always the obvious ones as in the following instances of Davies's speech:

here, I said, look here, mister, he opened the door, big door, he opened it...(p. 14).
Yes, I noticed the curtains pulled down there next door as we came along.
Yes, I noticed them heavy curtains pulled across next door as we came along. I noticed them heavy big curtains right across the window down there. (pp. 12-13)

The same applies to adverb-adverb collocations:

Yes, this'd keep the dust off, all right. Well off. (p. 43)

In Davies's occasional outbursts of invective the expletives are of the standard working-class type. Davies complains that the weather is "so blasted bloody awful" (p. 19) and that "bloody rain" (p. 53) comes in on his head through the window which Aston wants open all the time. A breakaway from the predictable pattern is achieved when the number of expletives is unusually high as in "Every lousy blasted bit of all my bleeding belongings" (p. 10).

Collocational conventionality within the code is also typical of Mick's speech. 'Old' is the most frequent modifying adjective; Mick warns Davies to keep his hands off "my old Mum" and calls Davies in turn "an old rogue", "an old scoundrel", "an old skate" and "an old barbarian" (p. 35). The adjective 'old' is, however, partly responsible for the wry new twist in a set idiom in the following:

DAVIES. Well now, look that puts the lid on it, don't it? (p. 65)
MICK. - And to put the old tin lid on it, - (p. 74)

Mick's mysterious Uncle Sid is "a spitting image" of Davies, or, as he puts it later, "Dead spit of you he was" (pp. 31-32). Only in Mick's occasional bursts into the "object mode" of an elaborated code do the collocations show more variations as in the following description of what could be done to the flat through interior decoration:
You could have an off-white pile linen rug, a table in...afromosia teak veneer, sideboard with matt black drawers, curved chairs with cushioned seats, armchairs in oatmeal tweed, a beach frame settee with a woven seagrass seat, white-topped, heat-resistant coffee table, - (p. 60)

Phrasal Verbs

The idioms "I got to loosen myself up", "I could have got done in", "it was knocked off" in the quoted passage are significant also from another point of view. They show Pinter's reliance on phrasal verbs instead of their more formal simple-verb counterparts in the corresponding elaborated code. Phrasal verbs are, of course, a feature of elaborated codes as well. However, as late as 1926 Logan Pearsall Smith wrote,

> Whether due to the disapproval of old-fashioned grammarians, or to the fact that their use is, for the most part, more colloquial than literary, there still persists a certain prejudice against phrasal verbs, and many writers half-consciously avoid them. These combinations are, it is true, almost always colloquial, and being popular in their origin, they are often, especially at their first introduction, condemned as slang.

He adds, "they add immensely to the richness of our vocabulary, and they are full of energetic life, and enrich our consciousness with the half-conscious association of many muscular sensations". Phrasal verbs in Pinter's text could be another double-edged device; on the one hand, they impart life and energy to the dialogue, but on the other, since they often occur in working-class idioms, they stamp the language as being of a rigid restricted code and thus seem stereotyped.

There are passages in The Caretaker which contain many phrasal verbs, such as the following:

DAVIES. - I get up in the morning, I'm worn out! I got business to see to. I got to move myself, I got to sort myself out, I got to get fixed up. (p. 63)
DAVIES. I tell you what, I might do that... just till I get myself sorted out. You got enough furniture here.
ASTON. I picked it up. Just keeping it here for the time being. Thought it might come in handy. (p. 16)

The phrasal verbs in the above passages are not exclusively working-class, but as was pointed out before, quite a few of the phrasal verbs in The Caretaker tend to occur in mainly working-class idioms, e.g., those that imply aggression, hostility and "getting the better of others" such as "do out of", "do in" (p. 8) and "mess about" (p. 50). Even the phrases Davies uses to express incredulity at what the previous speaker has just said seem to be coloured by restricted code aggression:

ASTON. They're out of commission.
DAVIES. Get away. (p. 12)
ASTON,... and she said, how would you like me to have a look at your body?
DAVIES. Get out of it. (p. 25)

Pinter's Handling of Various Codes

What the above examples of Pinter's language in The Caretaker show is his rare skill in handling the particular code employed, in bringing out its predictability and stereotypy in an exaggerated form. There is little doubt that Pinter shows equal skill in handling other codes besides that used in The Caretaker. Here it might be of some interest to take a look at a passage from the beginning of a recent short play by Pinter, The Examination:

MAN. When we began, I allowed him intervals. He expressed no desire for these, nor any objection. And so I took it upon myself to adjudge their allotment and duration. They were not consistent, but took alteration with what I must call the progress of our talks. With the chalk I kept I marked the proposed times upon the blackboard, before the beginning of a session, for him to examine, and to offer any criticism if he felt so moved. But
he made no objection, nor, during our talks, expressed any desire for a break in the proceedings. However, as I suspected they might benefit both of us, I allowed him intervals.

This remarkable one-act play contains no reference to the specific circumstances in which the examination takes place besides the fact that an examination or interrogation of a kind is in fact being described. As the speech proceeds, however, the audience is able to pick up enough speech signals to form an idea, at one level of interpretation, of what the specific situation might be. The speech, with its heavy, unwieldy sentence structure and similarly heavy, abstract vocabulary, makes it possible to identify the language as a kind of 'officialese'. The slightly foreign, exaggerated formality posing as meticulous objectivity and rationality, echoes the formality often associated with some forms of political reasoning. So the longer the monologue continues, the stronger the impression of stereotypy, not necessarily because of specific linguistic features that could be pointed out and catalogued, but because the central ideology at the core of the monologue has become, to a large number of people, stereotyped, a cliché in the Zijderveldian sense of the word.

The Literary Uses of Stereotypy in The Caretaker

What are the literary uses of stereotypy in The Caretaker? In the plethora of critical comment on The Caretaker one often reiterated conclusion stands clear: the trio in the play, two of its members fighting for survival on the very fringes of humanity, are engaged in a grim battle for territory. This battle involves some of man's deepest instincts and fears, which entails, for the two pariah members of society especially, a situation of extreme stress and precariousness. They are not able to articulate these fears, and even if they were it would be taboo to do
so, because the result would be a loss of face, a loss of self-esteem. That the surface dialogue is in the form of a restricted code in all its stereotypy is "a palpable hit"; as Basil Bernstein puts it, "A restricted code contains a vast potential of meaning. It is a form of speech which symbolizes a communally based culture. It carries its own aesthetic". Be- cause so little is said in words the underlying sub-text assumes overwhelming proportions, which in turn heightens "the power of the text to claw".

That the stereotypy becomes more pronounced each time a taboo subject is approached could be further illustrated by the dialogue. When Aston offers a caretaking job to Davies the following exchange ensues:

DAVIES. Well, I...I never done caretaking before, you know...I mean to say...I never... what I mean to say is...I never been a caretaker before.

Pause

ASTON. How do you feel about being one, then?

DAVIES. Well, I reckon...Well, I'd have to know...you know...

ASTON. What sort of...

DAVIES. Yes, what sort of...you know...

Pause.

ASTON. Well, I mean...

DAVIES. I mean, I'd have to...I'd have to...

ASTON. Well, I could tell you...

DAVIES. That's...that's it...you see...you get my meaning?

ASTON. When the time comes...

DAVIES. I mean, that's what I'm getting at, you see...

ASTON. More or less exactly what you...

DAVIES. You see, what I mean to say...What I'm getting at is...I mean, what sort of jobs...

Pause

ASTON. Well, there's things like the stairs...and the...the bells...

DAVIES. But it'd be a matter...wouldn't it...it'd be a matter of a broom...isn't it?

(pp. 42-43)

The almost entire piece of dialogue consists in "conversational formulas" interspersed with ready-made
sentences and phrases. Especially for Davies it is of paramount importance here to carry on a conversation without giving away too much: his possible suspicion that Aston's plan will in fact never materialize, his possible dislike of work and reluctance to accept a permanent job as well as his self-doubt as to whether he would be able to hold a permanent job are all well concealed behind the conventional turns of phrasing. Another occasion on which extreme caution is called for is when Davies probes too deep into the taboo subject of Aston's mental illness. Again stereotypy is resorted to:

DAVIES. I was saying, he's...he's a bit of a funny bloke, your brother.

Mick stares at him.

MICK. Funny? Why?
DAVIES. Well...he's funny...
MICK. What's funny about him?

Pause.

DAVIES. Not liking work.
MICK. What's funny about that?
DAVIES. Nothing.

Pause.

MICK. I don't call it funny.
DAVIES. Nor me. (pp. 49-50)

Repetition, which can also contribute to creating an impression of stereotypy, has a highly integrated function in the play. Geoffrey N. Leech says of repetition (he is mainly concerned with repetition in poetry, but his findings have validity even here),

Although repetition sometimes indicates poverty of linguistic resource, it can, as we see, have its own kind of eloquence. By underlining rather than elaborating the message, it presents a simple emotion with force. It may further suggest a suppressed intensity of feeling - an imprisoned feeling, as it were, for which there is no outlet but a repeated hammering at the confining walls of language. In a way, saying the same thing over and over is a reflection on the inadequacy of language to express what you have to express 'in one go'. 31
The stereotypy contained in a restricted code also makes possible the foregrounding of elaborated codes. Mick's speech on the interior decoration (p. 60) is an example, his speech on the long-term renting of the flat (p. 36) another. A break-away from a familiar code serves to increase Davies's insecurity and to confuse him. So Mick exploits elaborated code speech when he wants to widen the distance between himself and Davies, who experiences such speech as a menace to the security he is striving for.

By means of stereotypy Pinter also achieves remarkable feats of humour. Often these take the form of *reduc-tio ad absurdum* of triviality as in the scene in which Davies explains that he needs a clock:

DAVIES. See, what I need is a clock! I need a clock to tell the time! How can I tell the time without a clock? I can't do it! I said to him, I said, look here, what about getting in a clock, so's I can tell what time it is? I mean, if you can't tell what time you're at you don't know where you are, you understand my meaning? (p. 62)

The kind of apparent triviality that Davies's argument represents is often found in absurd drama. However, whatever extremes of triviality the dialogue reaches, Pinter never loses touch with reality. Every speech, however bizarre, has a direct connection with the situation at hand.

To summarize the above discussion it can be stated again that there are features in Pinter's language that have a two-way effect as far as stereotypy is concerned, repetition being one and the use of phrasal verbs another. Both increase predictability and heighten the *déjà vu* effect; repetition, however, can provide a great deal of subtle variation and phrasal verbs life and vigour, especially in some strong working-class idioms. The real stereotypy is represented by a profusion of idiosyncratic speech ("con-
versational formulas"), which is often devoid of meaning, further by collocational conventionality and the considerable number of ready-made sentences and clauses. Since Pinter's language as a whole in The Caretaker can be labelled as representing a working-class restricted code, it means that it has a high degree of built-in stereotypy such as syntactic predictability and a narrow range of lexis. If Partridge's dictionaries are used as a guide, the number of clichés is negligible; the same applies to expressions found in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. Many people, including Zijderveld, regard "conversational formulas", some others even ready-made stock sentences, as clichés, which might explain why Pinter's dialogue is often described as cliché-ridden.

Waiting for Godot

The most thoroughgoing demonstration of the use of the cliché in Beckett has been given by Niklaus Gessner. Gessner writes about WFG, "Seitenlang kann man weiterlesen, bis man auf einen Satz stösst, der kein abgegriffenes Cliché wäre, den man also nicht schon dutzende Male gehört hat, sondern die eine Situation zeichnet oder die Handlung weiterführt".32 To support his argument Gessner breaks up the dialogue in the first scene into its "cliché-like components" ("clichéhaften Bestandteile"), which he rearranges first in alphabetical, then in a random order, each time producing viable dialogue. Gessner does not try to define the term cliché; the terms "feste Redewendung", "erstarrte sprachliche Fügung" and "Wortcliché" seem to have been used interchangeably in his dissertation. Again it can be noted that the clichés which have found their way into Partridge's dictionaries are not numerous in WFG; all in all they are only slightly more numerous than in The Caretaker.33 What Gessner labels as clichés are for the most part ready-made stock sentences and phrases which abound in everyday con-
versation and which one has indeed heard dozens of
times before. One of the purest examples of dialogue
made up of such sentences is the thematic 'refrain'
which is repeated several times in the course of the
play:

> ESTRAGON. Let's go.
> VLADIMIR. We can't.
> ESTRAGON. Why not?
> VLADIMIR. We are waiting for Godot.

The only deviation from the ready-made pattern in
these sentences is the name Godot. When, in the final
scene, the 'refrain' is repeated in an extended form,
the sentences still retain their ready-made character:

> ESTRAGON. Oh yes, let's go far away from here.
> VLADIMIR. We can't.
> ESTRAGON. Why not?
> VLADIMIR. We have to come back tomorrow.
> ESTRAGON. What for?
> VLADIMIR. To wait for Godot. (pp. 92-93)

**Waiting for Godot versus The Caretaker**

The dialogue in *The Caretaker* was also seen to con­
sist to a considerable degree of ready-made type sen­
tences, yet it bears little similarity to the dialogue
in *WFG*. For the purpose of comparison the scene follow­
ing Lucky's dance is cited below (many other pages
would doubtless have served equally well). In the
scene Pozzo has just found, to his consternation, that
he has lost his "pulverizer":

> POZZO. (Normal voice). No matter! What was I
saying. (He ponders). Wait. (Ponders). Well
now isn't that...(He raises his head). Help
me!
> ESTRAGON. Wait!
> VLADIMIR. Wait!
POZZO. Wait!

   All three take off their hats simultaneously, press their hands to their foreheads, concentrate.

ESTRAGON. (triumphantly). Ah!
VLADIMIR. He has it.
POZZO. (impatient). Well?
ESTRAGON. Why doesn't he put down his bags?
VLADIMIR. Rubbish!
POZZO. Are you sure?
VLADIMIR. Damn it. Haven't you already told us?
POZZO. I've already told you!
ESTRAGON. He's already told us?
VLADIMIR. Anyway he has put them down.
ESTRAGON. (glance at Lucky). So he has. And what of it?
VLADIMIR. Since he has put down his bags it is impossible we should have asked why he does not do so.
POZZO. Stoutly reasoned!
ESTRAGON. And why has he put them down?
POZZO. Answer us that.
VLADIMIR. In order to dance.
ESTRAGON. True!
POZZO. True!

   Silence. They put on their hats.

ESTRAGON. Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!
VLADIMIR. (to Pozzo). Tell him to think.
POZZO. Give him his hat.
VLADIMIR. His hat?
POZZO. He can't think without his hat.
VLADIMIR. (to Estragon). Give him his hat.
ESTRAGON. Me! After what he did to me! Never!
VLADIMIR. I'll give it to him.
   He does not move. (p. 41)

The passage does nothing or very little to advance the action or to circumscribe a situation. The absurd triviality of the argument at one point - whether the
question why Lucky does not put down his bags has been
settled or not—has it's parallels in The Caretaker
as indeed have the arguments elsewhere in WFG\textsuperscript{34}, but
otherwise it is easier to find differences than simi-
larities between the two plays. Pinter's strict real-
ism has given way to the intentional artificiality
of music-hall effects. The characters have been
stripped of their individuality and a clearly defi-
nable code like that used by Davies which already
in itself is sufficient to invest a character with
dimensions such as social status which it is futile
to look for in Vladimir, Estragon or Pozzo. With one
or two exceptions pertaining to Lucky's bags the sen-
tences are of the ready-made type; the syntax is
simple and the lexis narrow in the scene, yet it is
apparent that Beckett's tramps are no more tramps than
they are anything else; rather, they are Everyman, or
parts of Everyman as some critics might want to point
out. There are only a few lines in the play in which
the characters' talk approaches anything like a work-
ing-class restricted code (e.g., Estragon's lines "Ah
stop blathering and help me off with this bloody
thing" (p. 10), and "People are bloody ignorant apes"
(p. 13). Idiosyncratic speech is used sparingly;
\textsuperscript{35} closest to being idiosyncratic speech in the quoted
passage are Pozzo's "What was I saying" and "Well now
isn't that...", which he repeats every time he loses
something, and Estragon's rhetorical question "And
what of it?" The unusual adverb-participle collocation
"stoutly reasoned" in the quoted passage is indicative
of the variety and elegance of Beckett's adjective-
noun collocations, e.g., "jaded appetite" (p. 25),
"idle discourse" (p. 79), "The foul brood" (p. 79),
"accursed time" (p. 89), "abyssal depths" (p. 80),
"immense confusion" (p. 80), some of them being terms
of abuse, e.g., "ceremonious ape" and "punctilious pig"
(p. 75). Pozzo recalls that Lucky "used to think very
prettily once" (p. 39), again using an unusual verb-
adverb collocation. The above collocations, some of
them stereotyped phrases in an elaborated code (e.g., "the foul brood", "idle discourse") are evidence of the wide range of the lexis in _WF_ when compared to the lexis in _The Caretaker_.

**Music-Hall Passages**

The music-hall patter in the quoted passage is simple and stereotyped and that goes for many other passages of similar music-hall dialogue, e.g., the hanging episode (pp. 17-18) and the conversation following Pozzo's breakdown (pp. 34-35). However, there are passages like the one quoted by Martin Esslin in _The Theatre of the Absurd_ in which "the cross-talk of Irish music-hall comedians is miraculously transmuted into poetry".\(^{36}\) The antiphonal beauty of this, "probably the most lyrical, the most perfectly phrased passage in the play" has been achieved through syntactic austerity equal to that in the more prosaic passages, yet few of the lines could be equated with 'everyday conversation':

---

**Vladimir.** You're right, we're inexhaustible.
**Estragon.** It's so we won't think.
**Vladimir.** We have that excuse.
**Estragon.** It's so we won't hear.
**Vladimir.** We have our reasons.
**Estragon.** All the dead voices.
**Vladimir.** They make a noise like wings.
**Estragon.** Like leaves.
**Vladimir.** Like sand.
**Estragon.** Like leaves.

Silence.

**Vladimir.** They all speak together.
**Estragon.** Each one to itself.

Silence.

**Vladimir.** Rather they whisper.
**Estragon.** They rustle.
**Vladimir.** They murmur.
ESTRAGON. They rustle.

Silence.

VLADIMIR. What do they say?

ESTRAGON. They talk about their lives.

VLADIMIR. To have lived is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON. They have to talk about it.

VLADIMIR. To be dead is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON. It is not sufficient.

Silence.

VLADIMIR. They make a noise like feathers.

ESTRAGON. Like leaves.

VLADIMIR. Like ashes.

ESTRAGON. Like leaves.

Long silence. (pp. 62-63)

It also happens that the flow of ready-made sentences is broken by a recondite reference like the one in the hanging episode referred to above:

VLADIMIR. With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that? (p. 17)

Lack of Associative Links

The dialogue in WF contains a feature which might also partly explain why many critics get such a strong impression of stereotypy from the play. It can be seen from the passage quoted from WF, page 41, that a transition from one topic to another can be abrupt, there being no logical or associative connection between the line of one speaker and that of the next. After silence follows Estragon's line "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful". It is a statement with no apparent connection with what went on before, and it is followed by Vladimir's line, addressed to Pozzo, "Tell him to think", equally unconnected with the immediately preceding lines. As
Gessner puts it, "Redewendungen" in WFG are often not "festgefügte Teile eines Ganzen, keine differenzierten Träger eines Sinnes, keine sprachlichen Individuen, sondern abgenutzte Einheitsbauklötze, aus denen sich - bei unveränderter Verwendung sämtlicher Elemente - nach Bedarf auch ein ganz anderer Text zusammen-fabrizieren lässt". The same lack of connecting links between some of the building blocks which make up the dialogue is discernible, e.g., in the following little "canter":

ESTRAGON. Well? If we gave thanks for our mercies?
VLADIMIR. What is terrible is to have thought.
ESTRAGON. But did that ever happen to us?
VLADIMIR. Where are all these corpses from?
ESTRAGON. These skeletons.
VLADIMIR. Tell me that.
ESTRAGON. True.
VLADIMIR. We must have thought a little.
VLADIMIR. At the very beginning.
VLADIMIR. A charnel-house! A charnel-house!
ESTRAGON. You don't have to look.
VLADIMIR. You can't help looking.
ESTRAGON. True.
VLADIMIR. Try as one may.
ESTRAGON. I beg your pardon?
VLADIMIR. Try as one may.
ESTRAGON. We should turn resolutely towards Nature.
VLADIMIR. We've tried that.
ESTRAGON. True.
VLADIMIR. Oh, it's not the worst, I know.
ESTRAGON. What?
VLADIMIR. To have thought.
ESTRAGON. Obviously.
VLADIMIR. But we could have done without it.
ESTRAGON. Que voulez-vous?
VLADIMIR. I beg your pardon?
ESTRAGON. Que voulez-vous?
VLADIMIR. Ah! que voulez-vous. Exactly.
Silence. (pp. 64-65)

The lack of logical and associative connection between the lines of the speakers serves to emphasize the calculated artificiality of the dialogue. As Alain Robbe-Grillet has pointed out, Vladimir's and Estragon's conversation "has no continuous thread to sustain it"; it "is reduced to absurd fragments: automatic exchanges, wordplay, mock-arguments all more or less abortive. They try everything, at random". Talk, like various music-hall conventional scattered throughout the play, has become another game to bring "the long day" to "the end of its repertory" (WFG, p. 86), to keep man from facing "the full reality of being" and maybe colossal boredom and emptiness when human existence has been distilled to its pure essence, the barest minimum stripped of all illusions — the reason why Estragon's seemingly innocuous remark "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" could be one of the most disturbing and ominous lines spoken on the modern stage.

Sentences of "Wonderful Shape"

How is it that Beckett's dialogue, built as it is, to a large extent, of ready-made stock sentences, in places almost at random, can have given rise to such a vast amount of critical comment and differing interpretations as is the case? Beckett himself has never encouraged this critical interest and has consistently refused to comment on his work. In one of his letters to Alan Schneider, who directed Beckett's plays in New York, Beckett wrote, "My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for
nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin." That Beckett takes an obsessive interest in the formal aspects of his work is evident. Martin Esslin conjectures that one reason why Beckett preferred to write in French even if his own translations show that the English language perfectly renders his meaning was the challenge and discipline it presented to his powers of expression. Beckett's extreme artistic rigour is reflected in his description of how a sentence in WFG, "One of the thieves was saved" (p. 11), was inspired by a similar sentence in Augustine.

Beckett wrote,

I am interested in the shape of ideas. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine: 'Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned'. That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters.

Thus one could expect there to be sentences in WFG that would be conspicuous for their "shape" and present a break-away from the intentional stereotypy of ready-made stock sentences. Such sentences would not, of course, in themselves provide an explanation why audiences feel a compulsion towards searching for hidden significances in the play; there is enough allusive material in WFG to support a variety of interpretations, both of a religious and psychological nature.

There are indeed sentences and phrases in Beckett which combine a memorable "shape" with the rare heuristic pith of which Zijderveld speaks in connection with many Shakespearean quotations and many proverbs in their pristine freshness. One of them, "blaming on his boots the faults of his feet" (p. 11), has already become proverbial and probably will, in time, share the fate of many proverbs and become a
cliché. A number of sentences which can be vaguely classified as proverbial or aphoristic occur in the play:

Never neglect the little things of life. (p. 10)
One is what one is. (p. 21)
The essential doesn't change. (p. 21)
The road is free to all. (p. 23)
Think twice before you do anything rash. (p. 29)
To each one his due. (p. 31)
The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. (p. 33)
nothing is certain. (p. 53)
It's never the same pus from one second to the next. (p. 60)
We are all born mad. Some remain so. (p. 80)
habit is a great deadener. (p. 91)

As is to be suspected in a convention such as the Theatre of the Absurd, the proverbs and aphorisms are not there just to add profundity and seriousness to the dialogue. Occasionally they are not spared the very same kind of deflation that may befall any speech or action that might aspire to "significance" of any kind. "Never neglect the little things of life" is spoken by Vladimir, the constant sufferer from urinary troubles, whilst buttoning his fly. Some proverbs tease one's memory by incorporating faint echoes from some other, "real" proverbs (e.g., Habit is second nature - Habit is a great deadener). Through changes they may even become mock-proverbs, like "it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes" (p. 18). Some, like "One is what one is" and "The essential doesn't change" are components in a music-hall type exchange and become cliché-like stock sentences among the rest. "To every man his little cross" is one of the many statements in WFG which through constant qualification and added afterthoughts are reduced to next to nothing: "(He sighs) Till he dies. (Afterthought). And is forgotten". (p. 62).
The religious element in WFG, quite independently of explicitly biblical language, is manifold and has invited a multitude of interpretations. "The theme of the two thieves on the cross, the theme of the uncertainty of the hope of salvation and the fortuitousness of the bestowal of grace, does indeed pervade the whole play", writes Martin Esslin. The biblical parallels, such as the name Godot, Godot's white beard, Vladimir's joy and Estragon's fear at the presumed approach of Godot, etc, are, however, elusive and occasionally directly reversed; e.g., Godot favours the minder of the goats and beats the minder of the sheep, contrary to the New Testament parable of the Son of God at the Last Judgment. Only a few phrases have an unmistakably biblical flavour, e.g., "in the fullness of time" (p. 82), "The things of time" (p. 86). Vladimir quotes a biblical proverb, but cannot quite remember it: "Hope deferred maketh the something sick, who said that?" (p. 10). The proverb Vladimir is referring to reads in its entirety: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: But when the desire commeth, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12). The speech in which Vladimir contemplates the problem whether or not the two should respond to Pozzo's cries for help, contains a sentence which manifests the form of biblical proverbs:

The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. (p. 80)

That the lion, an animal of biblical reference, has become the Blakean tiger, is not the only deviation from the Proverbs; Beckett's "proverb" also conspicuously fails to impart any edifying instruction that might help man to solve his spiritual problems, including the minor one whether Vladimir and Estragon should succour Pozzo in his predicament. The well-known and often quoted passage "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be
opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7) suffers complete disintegration in one of Vladimir's and Estragon's "automatic" exchanges:

VLADIMIR. When you seek your hear.
ESTRAGON. You do.
VLADIMIR. That prevents you from finding.
ESTRAGON. It does.
VLADIMIR. That prevents you from thinking.
ESTRAGON. You think all the same. (p. 64)

Multiplicity of Levels

It would seem that the pattern of stereotypy produced by the excessive use of ready-made type sentences is frequently broken in WFG by the sheer poetry of some music-hall exchanges, by vaguely proverbial or aphoristic sentences (which, of course, sometimes introduce stereotypy of their own) and allusions with religious overtones. These are in sharp contrast to the bleakness and poverty of Pinter's starkly realistic dialogue. That poetic elements are often deflated by music-hall trivia makes the symbolism of the play many-faceted and difficult to pin down. Repetition, as it is found in The Caretaker, is used very little in WFG, although Estragon tends to repeat Vladimir's lines and parts of his questions. Pozzo uses repetition for rhetorical purposes; his speech on time (p. 89) has a strong impact because of forceful repetition of simple, ready-made elements:

POZZO. (suddenly furious). Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?
(Calmer). They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.
The passages which, like the above, are not followed by a deflation stand out as the more sombre from the rest of the dialogue. It is perhaps fitting that, to many, such passages have appeared to be particularly loaded with symbolic content. One example is the following which becomes the central passage in Eva Metman's Jungian thesis that WFG shows the human psyche in the twilight zone between dying attitudes and conventions and awakening to the suffering of being which might lead to a transition to something new. At the end of Vladimir's speech the boy messenger's arrival plunges Vladimir back into his reliance upon the coming of Godot:

VLADIMIR. Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (Estragon, having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again. Vladimir stares at him). He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (Pause). Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forcepts. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens). But habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at Estragon). At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (Pause). I can't go on! (Pause). What have I said? He goes feverishly to and fro, halts finally at extreme left, broods. Enter Boy right. He halts. Silence.

BOY. Mister... (Vladimir turns). Mr. Albert... (pp. 90-91)

Pozzo's "hopeless vision of life as a brilliant moment between the womb and the tomb" appears in a new form in Vladimir's speech: "Astride of a grave and a diffi-
cult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-
digger puts on the forceps". Doubly ambivalent, the
passage also evokes T.S. Eliot's theme of spiritual
rebirth in *Journey of the Magi*:

> this Birth was Hard and bitter agony for us,
like Death, our death.

That Beckett's dialogue in *WFG* presents such a baffl-
ing multiplicity of levels besides the simple stereo-
typy of basic music-hall patter sets *WFG* apart also
from Ionesco's convention. Not only are parts of
Beckett's dialogue couched in exquisitely-"shaped"
elaborated codes, but the play also possesses allu-
sive and symbolic depths quite foreign to, say, *The
Bald Prima Donna*. The characters in *The Bald Prima
Donna* converse in stereotyped sentences because the
play's "message" is life as a cliché. In *WFG* stereo-
typed speech is only one facet among many; whether
Beckett himself approves of it or not, his audience
involuntarily receives glimpses of vast areas of "sub-
surface" in the dialogue. As Hugh Kenner has described
the experience of attending a performance of *Endgame*,
we witness "for ninety unbroken minutes the surfaces
of Nothing, always designedly faltering on the brink
of utter insignificance into which nevertheless we
cannot but project so many awful significances."46

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

The view that drama, like all art and literature, is
subject to change and development is elaborated in an
observation made by Bert O. States: "any vital set of
dramatic myths and conventions passes through three
stages, the 'naive', the 'sophisticated' and the
'decadent'".47 Quoting States, David Bratt, in his
comprehensive dissertation on irony in Tom Stoppard's
work, argues that Stoppard represents the decadent
stage of absurd drama.48 Like most generalizations,
David Bratt's conclusion might be an over-confident simplification, especially in the light of some later plays by Stoppard which are not predominantly absurd. But it is obvious that Stoppard's R&G owes a tremendous amount to WFG, to the extent of being a direct derivative of Beckett's play. It is also accepted by most people that Beckett, who in this context would be classified as 'sophisticated', represents the zenith of absurd drama. Perhaps it is also relevant to point out here that Pinter's ingenious mixture of realism and absurdism cannot be regarded as representative of the 'naive' stage; that designation would rather belong to Alfred Jarry and the early experimenters with absurdism.

Since WFG is in many ways 'parent' play to R&G it is reasonable to expect that the stereotypy in the two plays would show similar patterns. That is the case to some extent. It was seen that the use of the cliché was slightly more extensive in WFG than in The Caretaker. In R&G it has considerably increased, which could be interpreted as Stoppard's fondness for the more literary turn of phrase. Stoppard's clichés range from a foreign phrase, "flagrante delicto" (p. 16) to Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's "steps in the right direction" (p. 63) and Rosencrantz's vain hope to "put a spoke in their wheel" (p. 78). The catch phrases include the old music-hall quip used by Archie Rice in The Entertainer "Don't clap too loud, it's a very old house", only the Player's warning concerns "a very old world" (p. 16). "Looking a gift horse in the mouth" and "drowning men clutching at straws" are subjects in two of the phrases from Brewer's dictionary which, in a changed form, occur in R&G (pp. 54, 78).

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead versus The Caretaker and Waiting for Godot

For the sake of comparison an excerpt from the
beginning of the play is quoted below:

Guil (flipping a coin): There is an art to the building up of suspense.
Ros: Heads.
Guil (flipping another): Though it can be done by luck alone.
Ros: Heads.
Guil: If that's the word I'm after.
Ros: (raises his head at Guil): Seventy-six love.

(Guil gets up but has nowhere to go. He spins another coin over his shoulder without looking at it, his attention being directed at his environment or lack of it) Heads.
Guil: A weaker man might be moved to re-examine his faith, if in nothing else at least in the law of probability.
(He slips a coin over his shoulder as he goes to look upstage).
Ros: Heads.
(Guil, examining the confines of the stage, flips over two more coins as he does so, one by one of course. Ros announces each of them as "heads").
Guil (musing): The law of probability, it has been oddly asserted, is something to do with the proposition that if six monkeys (he has surprised himself)...if six monkeys were...
Ros: Game?
Guil: Were they?
Ros: Are you?
Guil (understanding): Game. (Flips a coin).
The law of averages, if I have got this right, means that if six monkeys were thrown up in the air for long enough they would land on their tails about as often as they would land on their -
Ros: Heads. (He picks up the coin).
Guil: Which even at first glance does not strike one as a particularly rewarding speculation, in either sense, even without the monkeys. I mean you wouldn't bet on it. I mean I would, but you wouldn't...(pp. 7-8)

This initial piece of dialogue firmly sets the tone of the play; what might once have been ornate conversation between two polished Elizabethan courtiers has acquired the air of articulate, up-to-date Oxbridge volubility. The bleak environment, or the "lack of it", and the games played to pass the time are familiar
from WFG. It is evident, however, that Guil's speech is not an edifice constructed out of ready-made building blocks according to an alterable pattern in the same way as Gessner has shown Vladimir's and Estragon's dialogue to be. There are sentences and clauses in Guil's speech which have such a familiar ring to them that they can be regarded as ready-made, e.g., "If that's the word I'm after","if I have got this right", "I mean you wouldn't bet on it" (for a more detailed account of the use of ready-made sentences and clauses in R&G, see the Appendix). But even these ready-made sentences and clauses are altogether more literary than the corresponding elements in Pinter's dialogue, and a consistent use of elaborated codes is immediately apparent in Stoppard's play. Stoppard's dialogue also differs from the studied simplicity and purity of Beckett's dialogue already in the matter of the respective length of the sentences; at the core of Beckett's drama seems to be an experiment to reduce the medium to its minimum, to see how much can be taken away from a play for the dramatic impact to remain intact, whilst R&G shows a playwright using language profusely. Two collocations in the quoted passage, "oddly asserted" and "rewarding speculation", give some foretaste of the style of a playwright, who, not unlike Beckett, strives for an elegance of diction.

Music-Hall Passages

Music-hall talk is an essential part of the dialogue in R&G as it is in WFG. Some of the music-hall exchanges in R&G seem to be direct parallels to those in WFG. "That's the idea, let's ask each other questions", says Estragon (WFG, p. 64); in R&G the asking of questions takes the form of a question game, played on an extensive scale (R&G, pp. 30-36). In WFG Vladimir and Estragon take considerable pains trying to find out the date and determine the location; in
R&G the heroes are worried about the points of the compass and whether they are witnessing a sunrise or sunset (e.g., R&G, pp. 41-42, 62). As in WFG, so in R&G the music-hall talk consists to a very high degree of ready-made stock sentences. There are also passages in R&G where the order of the lines is not the only possible one, but could be changed without affecting the "intelligibility" of the dialogue:

Ros: - Where's it going to end?
Guil: That's the question.
Ros: It's all questions.
Guil: Do you think it matters?
Ros: Doesn't it matter to you?
Guil: Why should it matter?
Ros: What does it matter why?
Guil (teasing gently): Doesn't it matter why it matters?
Ros (rounding on him): What's the matter with you?
Pause
Guil: It doesn't matter.
Ros (voice in the wilderness):... What's the game?
Guil: What are the rules? (p. 32)

In passages like the above the sentences have become almost interchangeable building blocks and speech merely a game. The difference between Stoppard's "automatic" exchanges and those of Beckett lies in the manner the two playwrights handle their material. Stoppard seems to have an irresistible urge towards verbal showmanship as the above virtuoso performance, based on simple variations on simple everyday sentences like "It doesn't matter" testifies. This kind of word-play is not resorted to in WFG, where all extraneous material seems to have been kept to the minimum. Another difference concerns the cohesive relations within music-hall passages. Even if the above passage evinces some discontinuity in the flow of the dialogue (e.g., the beginning and the end), the bulk of the passage forms one logical and associative entity. All in all there is a tendency in R&G towards considerable logical and associative cohesion within music-hall
passages, more so than in WFG. The following excerpts built largely of ready-made sentences may provide illustration:

Ros: We're on a boat. (Pause). Dark isn't it?
Guil: Not for night.
Ros: No, not for night.
Guil: Dark for day.
Pause.
Ros: Oh yes, it's dark for day.
Guil: We must have gone north, of course.
Ros: Off course?
Guil: Land of the midnight sun, that is.
Ros: Of course. (p. 71)

Each step of this plodding game of deduction, starting from "dark" and leading to the "land of the midnight sun", is patiently laid bare, the very insistence of the characters on discussing obvious facts in itself creating rich possibilities for comedy. "Dark" leads first to the contemplation of the period of time with which it is associated, "night", and then to the spatial and geographical considerations which affect the phenomenon of dark: "north", "the land of the midnight sun". The sound pattern of "of course" is reflected in "off course", which, at the same time, gives vent to Ros's anxiety about the navigational success of their expedition. The second part of the passage repeats and sums up the ingredients of the first part in a speeded-up succession:

Ros: I think it's getting light.
Guil: Not for night.
Ros: This far north.
Guil: Unless we're off course.
Ros (small pause): Of course.

In the following passage tight associative coherence is gained through the fact that the verbs all denote functions of sensory and other bodily organs:

Ros: - I can't see a thing.
Guil: You can still think, can't you?
Ros: I think so.
Guil: You can still talk.
Ros: What should I say?
Guil: Don't bother. You can feel, can't you?
Ros: Ah! There's life in me yet!
Guil: What are you feeling?
Ros: A leg. Yes, it feels like my leg.
Guil: How does it feel?
Ros: Dead.
Guil: Dead?
Ros (panic): I can't feel a thing! (p. 70)

The music-hall passages in R&G perhaps never attain the rarefied beauty of similar passages in WFG. Occasionally there is some allusive material inserted to enrich a passage. The following exchange includes an allusion to the Philomel myth:

Guil: Now mind your tongue, or we'll have it out and throw the rest of you away, like a nightingale at a Roman feast.
Ros: Took the very words out of my mouth.
Guil: You'd be lost for words.
Ros: You'd be tongue-tied.
Guil: Like a mute in a monologue.
Ros: Like a nightingale at a Roman feast.
Guil: Your diction will go to pieces.
Ros: Your lines will be cut.
Guil: To dumbshos.
Ros: And dramatic pauses.
Guil: You'll never find your tongue.
Ros: Lick your lips.
Guil: Taste your tears.
Ros: Your breakfast.
Guil: You won't know the difference.
Ros: There won't be any.
Guil: We'll take the very words out of your mouth. (pp. 44-45)

The above passage also shows Stoppard's consummate skill in letting familiar-sounding phrases emerge in unfamiliar combinations and contexts, thus providing amusing word-play.

Contrived Verbal Links

In this context it could be pointed out that in R&G Stoppard seems to strive for smooth transitions from one scene to the next, providing associative and logical links between topical units. In this respect R&G has retained some affinities with the well-made
play in some contrast to WF\textsubscript{G}, where, as was seen earlier, the building blocks can remain conspicuously disconnected. The associative and logical links in R\&G can, however, be somewhat artificial, contrived through verbal trickery as in the following instances:

Ros (relaxes): It couldn't have been real.
Guil: "The colours red, blue and green are real. The colour yellow is a mystical experience shared by everybody" - demolish.
(p. 14)

Here it is Guil's fictitious essay title that provides a smooth transition from the word "real" via colours to Guil's analysis of mystical encounters which is to follow. A verbal link connects the Player's speech on the essence of truth to the discussion of Hamlet's melancholy:

Player: - One acts on assumptions. What do you assume?
Ros: Hamlet is not himself, outside or in. -
(p. 48)

Aphoristic Speech

The dichotomy of music-hall patter versus aphoristic mode of speech is evident in R\&G as it is in WF\textsubscript{G}. The character who tends to speak in aphorisms and epigrams is the Player, who bears some resemblance to Lord Malquist in Lord Malquist & Mr Moon.\textsuperscript{51} They have a similar attitude to life in that they observe the struggle of those engaged in action whilst remaining passive, or, in Lord Malquist's words, their posture is "that of the Stylist, the spectator as hero, the man of inaction who would not dare roll up his sleeves for fear of creasing the cuffs".\textsuperscript{52} Being an outsider, the Player can afford to regard Ros and Guil, mock-heroes enmeshed in tragedy, with sententious serenity. The Player's aphorisms and epigrams include references to dramatic art and the
theatre/life metaphor as well as to life in general in a hostile world:

For some of us it is performance, for others, patronage. (p. 16)
We keep to our usual stuff, more or less, only inside out. We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off. Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit being an entrance somewhere else. (p. 20)
Uncertainty is the normal state. (p. 47)
Everything has to be taken on trust; truth is only that which is taken to be true. It's the currency of living. There may be nothing behind it, but it doesn't make any difference so long as it is honoured. (p. 48)
There's a design at work in all art - (p. 57)
Generally speaking, things have gone about as far as they can possibly go when things have got about as bad as they reasonably get. (pp. 57-58)
The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily. That is what tragedy means. (p. 58)
Life is a gamble, at terrible odds - if it was a bet you wouldn't take it. (p. 83)
In our experience, most things end in death. (p. 89)

The Player is not, however, the only one who is inclined to speak in epigrams. Guil, who has lost the neutral ground of an observer in the heat of the action, also has lines which tend towards the aphoristic or epigrammatic. On at least one occasion he even resorts to an old proverb.

The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defence against the pure emotion of fear. (pp. 11-12)
The only beginning is birth and the only end is death - if you can't count on that, what can you count on? (p. 28)
Your smallest action sets off another somewhere else, and is set off by it. (p. 29)
- if we can't learn by experience, what else have we got? (p. 65)
Old ways are the best ways. (p. 33)

The question is, does not even Ros make some attempts at the epigrammatic, albeit along the lines of gruesome humour:
Life in a box is better than no life at all. I expect. (p. 51)

Aphoristic and epigrammatic speech does not stand out in R&G in the same way as it does in WFG. Beckett's "reductionism" resulting in concentrated language has given way to the greater profuseness of Stoppard's consistently elaborated language.

Repetition_and_Idiosyncratic_Speech

Repetition in R&G is reminiscent of repetition in WFG; in the same way as Estragon tends to repeat Vladimir's lines Ros repeats Guil's. The proportion of idiosyncratic speech is negligible, some instances being "well", "I say", and "I mean" in cases where there is no elucidation of a previous utterance. In the "seeking-out" of Hamlet scene what could be described as idiosyncratic speech is used, on a symmetrically increasing and diminishing scale, in a manner typical of Stoppard's playful use of language:

Guil: Well...
Ros: Quite...
Guil: Well, well.
Guil: Quite.
Ros: Well. (p. 63)

From the above discussion of stereotypy in the three absurd plays, The Caretaker, WFG and R&G, one, perhaps somewhat unexpected, conclusion has emerged: the statement that Pinter's and Beckett's dialogue largely consists of clichés gets little support from dictionaries. On the other hand, most of the work on Partridge's A Dictionary of Clichés was presumably done in the 1930's, and Partridge makes no claim to be exhaustive. It is possible that the elements which in this study have been called ready-made stock sentences and phrases or idiosyncratic speech are regarded as clichés by many and that the clichés of
today are not exactly the same as those of three or four decades ago. Another conclusion is that stereotyping (as it is defined in this study) has very different manifestations in The Caretaker, which represents a mixture of working-class realism and absurdism, and in WFG and R&G, which, to a high degree, are language games for intellectuals. In all three plays the number of clichés which can be found in Partridge’s dictionary is surprisingly small. In The Caretaker the impression of stereotyping is heightened because of the extreme repetitiveness of the dialogue. The restricted code used by Pinter implies built-in stereotypy, such as a narrow range of lexis, trite collocations and syntactic predictability. Idiosyncratic speech is used more in The Caretaker than in WFG or R&G. The use of ready-made sentences and clauses in the three plays is taken up in greater detail in the Appendix. R&G contains the highest number of expressions from the three dictionaries used in this study; this could be interpreted as evidence of Stoppard’s predilection for the more literary turn of phrasing. Both WFG and R&G contain music-hall passages, often of heightened stereotypy because of ready-made elements. In WFG cohesive relations between lines can be tenuous; this in turn may contribute to the impression that the dialogue consists of unconnected stock elements. Aphoristic or epigrammatic speech, which is found in both WFG and R&G, may in some cases add to stereotypy; in most cases, however, being of an elaborated code type, it may counteract the impression of stereotypy.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1 See, e.g. Callen, p. 27, and Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 268.


5 Ibid., p. 3.


8 Ibid., p. 10.

9 Ibid., p. 18.

10 Ibid., p. 20.


14 Ibid., p. 103.

15 The term déjà vu is not used here in the narrowly specialized sense that it has in modern psychology.


The Caretaker contains the following clichés, or recognizable variants of clichés listed in A Dictionary of Clichés: "you know what I mean", "see what I mean" (pp. 8, 51), "It's life and death to me" (p. 13), as a matter of fact" (pp. 31, 46), "there was nothing in it" (p. 32), "Don't get out of your depth" (p. 35), "I know for a fact" (p. 41), "more or less" (p. 43), "Stands to reason" (p. 49) and "I mean to say" (p. 50). The following catch phrases, some in slightly different forms, have been listed in A Dictionary of Catch Phrases: "you can take it from me" (p. 9), "I'll tell you what" (pp. 8, 16), "Watch your step" (p. 38), "Don't get too glib" (p. 50) and "That puts the lid on it" (p. 65). The following expressions can be found in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable; "I've a good mind to -" (p. 15), "spitting image" (p. 31), "I reckon" (pp. 42, 76), "he won't buckle down to the job" (p. 49), "you must be off your nut" (p. 66) and "I don't think we're hitting it off" (p. 68).


Basil Bernstein gives his definition of elaborated and restricted codes, so termed by him, in Class, Codes and Control I, pp. 76-77. Much of what he says of "a public language" versus "a formal language" also applies to a working-class restricted code (pp. 42-43). So "a public language" is characterized by short, grammatically simple, often unfinished sentences, simple and repetitive use of conjunctions, rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs, infrequent use of impersonal pronouns as subjects, individual selection from a group of idiomatic phrases, symbolism which is of a low order of generality, etc.

Bernstein, p. 77.

Ibid., p. 151.

Smith, pp. 270-71.

Ibid., p. 260.

In this context it seems appropriate to guard against the assumption that only restricted codes bring with them predictability and hence stereotypy. To some extent, all codes do the same; as Crystal and Davy put it, the linguistic features of a given
piece of language correlate, to a varying degree, with "the situational variables in an extra-linguistic context". Crystal and Davy write: "we prefer to see this notion of language - situation predictability as a scale, with linguistic features which are to all intents and purposes totally predictable at one end, features which are entirely unpredictable within the English speech community at the other, and, in between, features showing many different degrees of predictability, some very restricted, some less so" (Investigating English Style, p. 63). David Crystal and Derek Davy are also critical of the use of the term "restricted language", by which they presumably mean Bernstein's restricted codes, and deplore the vagueness of the term "register", which they want to replace by the term "province". The term "restricted code" has been adopted in this study, even at the risk of adding to the terminological confusion prevalent in stylistics, because it seems to have some usefulness as a descriptive tool; the difference between the working-class realism of The Caretaker and the intellectual symbolism of Waiting for Godot and of R&G is also, to some extent, a sociological one, involving different codes.

That the term stereotypy has been made to include in this study more than clichés and stereotyped phrases also has its reason: it seems to be a basic tenet held by a number of absurd playwrights that much of what is normally regarded as 'common-core' language (and hence often regarded as uninteresting from a stylistic point of view) is in fact stereotype and largely devoid of meaning; speech has become, as a modern cliché aptly expresses it, largely a matter of "making the appropriate noises".

29 Bernstein, p. 152.
31 Leech, p. 79.
32 Gessner, p. 48.
33 The following clichés in WFG, some of them short phrases almost negligible from the point of view of overall stereotypy in a text, are listed in A Dictionary of Clichés: "in my opinion" (p. 15), "take it or leave it" (p. 18), "Looks at his last gasp" (p. 26), "you see who I mean" (pp. 29, 36),
"truth of the first water" (p. 33), "in a word" (p. 43), "in the light of" (p. 44), "by and large" (p. 44), "more or less" (pp. 44, 72), "over and done with" (p. 59), "How time flies" (p. 76), "bored to death" (p. 81) and "sooner or later" (p. 83). The play contains only two approximations of catch phrases, "So you tell me" (p. 18; Partridge: "So they tell me") and "There we are again" (p. 59; Partridge: "Here we are again").

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Cf. e.g., Estragon's boots (WFG, p. 67) and the boots Aston offers Davies (The Caretaker, p. 65).

I have counted the following expressions as idiosyncratic speech in WFG: "Well you see", "you see", "I tell you", "Oh I say", "How shall I say", "Let me see", "That is to say..."and" you understand". These expressions are used almost indiscriminately by all the three characters and none of them is predominantly working-class.


Gessner, p. 48.


Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 38.


In a letter to Alan Schneider, quoted in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame, p. 14.

Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 32.


Ibid., p. 127.

Hugh Kenner, "Life in the Box", in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Endgame, p. 60.


Bratt, p. 505.
The two names, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, will from now on be abbreviated as Ros and Guil.

R&G contains the following clichés listed in A Dictionary of Clichés: "flagrante delicto" (p. 16), "Let your imagination run riot" (p. 17), "more or less" (pp. 20, 55), "in character" (pp. 24, 80), "out of my depth", "out of our depth" (pp. 27, 49), "high and dry" (pp. 27, 46, 87), "where we stand" (p. 41), "a rough idea" (p. 42), "Took the very words out of my mouth" (p. 44), "with a vengeance" (p. 46), "we have been left so much to our own devices" (p. 47), "I can't for the life of me see" (p. 53), "man to man" (p. 53), "straight from the shoulder" (p. 53), "it doesn't bring death home to anyone" (p. 61), "step in the right direction" (p. 63), "shall we stretch our legs?" (p. 72), "at a loose end" (pp. 76, 81), "That'll put a spoke in their wheel" (p. 78), "a line must be drawn somewhere" (p. 78), "the ins and outs of the matter" (p. 80), "wheels within wheels" (p. 80), "All in the same boat" (p. 82), "Within limits" (p. 84), "You turn up out of the blue" (p. 88) and "to tell you the truth" (p. 91). The list of catch phrases in R&G is as follows: "you wouldn't bet on it" (p. 8), "it isn't your day" (p. 10), "it is nothing to write home about" (p. 11), "would you believe it" (p. 21; according to Partridge a cliché, but not listed in A Dictionary of Clichés), "Who do you think you are?" (p. 32), "It adds up" (p. 36), "it makes you think" (p. 36) and "cross my heart" (p. 69). The sentence "What's your name when you're at home?" (p. 31) is reminiscent of the catch phrase "Who is he when he's at home?". The following are expressions listed in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable: "in the long run" (p. 12), "starting from scratch" (pp. 14, 57), "keep an ear cocked" (p. 29), "we made some headway" (p. 40), "It's what we are counting on", "we are counting on you" (pp. 42, 46), "It rings a bell" (pp. 43, 62), "You'll never find your tongue" (p. 45), We're still finding our feet" (p. 47), "I should concentrate on not losing your heads" (p. 47), "I know which way the wind is blowing" (p. 47), "No point in looking at a gift horse" (p. 54), "clutching at straws" (p. 78), "leave well alone" (p. 80), "face to face" (p. 88) and "a cock and bull story" (p. 88). Of catch phrases Eric Partridge says, "Catch phrases are usually more pointed and 'human' than clichés, although the former sometimes arise from, and often they generate, the latter", adding, "you will have perceived that the categories Catch Phrase, Proverbial Saying, Famous Quotation, Cliché may coexist: they are not snobbishly exclusive, any one of the other. All depends on the context, the nuance, the tone" (A Dictionary of Catch Phrases, p. IX). It seems to me that Partridge's catch phrases are
generally more "low-class", a number of them being of scatological nature. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the relatively high incidence of expressions from the three dictionaries in R&G is that Stoppard tends to use a somewhat literary kind of phrasing. Whether these expressions considerably heighten the impression of stereotypy is more difficult to assess. The decisive factor seems to me to be the prevalence of ready-made sentences and clauses in a dialogue (see the Appendix). In the light of the above it appears that it is difficult to give a clear picture of the use of the cliché in literature unless linguists and lexicographers working with the problem put, to use another potential cliché, their house in order.

51 Lord Malquist and Mr Moon (London, 1974). The term 'aphorism' is used here in its fairly loose dictionary meaning 'any principle or precept expressed shortly and pithily' and the term 'epigram' in the sense 'a pointed or antithetical saying' (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary).

52 Ibid., p. 119.
CHAPTER II

DEVIATIONS FROM STEREOTYPED EXPRESSIONS IN ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

Tom Stoppard's popularity as a playwright is partly due to his highly acclaimed skill as a verbal artist. In the previous chapter an attempt was made to describe some of the ways in which Stoppard uses the repetitive, even mechanical elements in everyday communication and how he, in this respect, compares with Beckett and Pinter. The purpose here is to take a look at some ways in which Stoppard effects "the escape from banality", i.e., manages to introduce an element of novelty and surprise, however slight, into his dialogue. That Stoppard has definite aspirations on this score is revealed by what he once said in an interview:

I tend to write through a series of small, large, and microscopic ambushes - which might consist of a body falling out of a cupboard, or simply an unexpected word in a sentence. But my preoccupation as a writer, which possibly betokens a degree of insecurity, takes the form of contriving to inject some sort of interest and colour into every line.

In Dictionary of Language and Linguistics by R.R.K. Hartmann and F.C. Stork the term 'deviance' is defined as an utterance which is "not in keeping with the accepted grammatical and semantic norms of the standard language". Stoppard's linguistic "ambushes" in R&G could not, in most cases, be called deviances in the above sense of the word; sometimes they are slight changes in set idioms or phrases (it can be difficult or impossible to single out only one 'parent' expression at times); sometimes they are exactly what Stoppard says they are, namely unexpected words in the context, in other words unusual
collocations; sometimes there is a slight irregularity in Stoppard's syntactic pattern with the result that a more regular pattern suggests itself to the hearer, who feels the urge, as it were, to "nudge" the expression into position, thereby changing the implications of the passage. In all cases Stoppard has introduced something new or unexpected into an old, more or less stereotyped pattern. As is evidenced by his twisted proverbs, Beckett is no stranger to this method either, but Stoppard's marked predilection for quick wit makes him a particularly avid user of the method not only in R&G but also in his subsequent plays. Occasionally the changes brought about by this method in familiar, stereotyped expressions give an appearance of a sleight of hand.

\*Unidiomatic\* Idioms

The examples found of such twisted expressions in R&G are usually overtly farcical. The effect is not, however, always uniform, but can vary from grimly equivocal to the tentatively poetic or covertly tragic. The simplest cases are those in which Stoppard seems to aim at sheer humour. So, for instance, when Ros and Guil wake up after the episode in which they witness their own ultimate end, played by the Tragedians, Guil remarks:

Guil: As soon as we make a move they'll come pouring in from every side, shouting obscure instructions, confusing us with ridiculous remarks, messing us about from here to breakfast and getting our names wrong. (p. 62)

After Guil's somewhat querulous outpourings, tending to exaggerate the hardships the two protagonists are submitted to, the audience is prepared to hear a relatively strong phrase like 'from here to eternity' or 'from here to kingdom come'. When Guil, instead of a grossly exaggerating phrase, comes up with a grossly minimizing one, 'from here to breakfast', the effect is
naturally humorous. There is no question of lexical or grammatical deviation here, Stoppard's phrase being entirely within the accepted norms which govern the language usage, but the intrusion to the conscious level of other, more familiar phrases because of close similarity creates in the mind of the hearer an impression of verbal trickery. It is an amusing coincidence that the only instance of linguistic audacity along lines similar to the above in Pinter's *The Caretaker* involves "breakfast time"; in his final outburst Mick flings the following accusation at Davies: - "And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time" (*The Caretaker*, p. 74). Pinter's phrase, however, is clearly deviant, even if one does not regard it as a variant of 'from top to toe' or a similar phrase; in any case it would be unusual to combine a place adverbial with a time adverbial in the above manner. The total lack of any further deviant expressions in *The Caretaker*, whereas giving stereotyped expressions surprising new twists seems at times to become Stoppard's special trademark, is one aspect of the deep gulf that separates the two playwrights stylistically.

A line by the Player, "The plot was two corpses gone before we caught sight of ourselves..." (p. 45) contains the phrase 'two corpses gone', in which the degree of linguistic deviation parallels that of Dylan Thomas's famous phrase 'a grief ago'. In the case of Stoppard's phrase it is difficult to point out the exact linguistic rule that has been broken; the phrase seems to have been formed on the analogy of a phrase like 'far gone', in which 'far' can be replaced by noun phrases from a number of different classes. Nevertheless, it is unusual to measure the length of dramatic plots in terms of corpses, and by doing so Stoppard's gives a jolt to our sense of what is linguistically acceptable. The witticism can
naturally be interpreted as a satirical reflection on Elizabethan drama.

Collocational Unconventionality

In some cases it may be easier to explain the surprise element in Stoppard's expressions on a collocational basis rather than try to track down the 'parent' expression. So in Ros's line "I've never thought quicker" (p. 86) the humour is partly due to the fact that the verb 'think' rarely collocates with the adverb 'quick', partly to the obvious untruthfulness of Ros's statement; Ros never excels in particularly quick thinking and the mad rushing about in connection with the pirates' attack that precedes the quoted line never gives the impression of much thought being involved in the action. A similar case is the following (Ros is here describing the events of the fatal morning when he and Guil received the royal summons to attend at court):

Ros:...lights in the stable-yard, saddle up and off headlong and hotfoot across the land, our guides outstripped in breakneck pursuit of our duty! (p. 13)

'Breakneck pursuit' by itself would be an entirely conventional collocation since 'breakneck' normally combines with nouns that imply speed or can be associated with dangerous movement. But the 'pursuit of one's duty', which by itself is also an entirely orthodox noun phrase, generally entails such deliberate, staid actions, even in connection with dangerous occupations, that to label it 'breakneck' undoubtedly gives the phrase a touch of absurdity. This is one of the cases, however, in which the comedy does not remain unmixed; in the light of the outcome of Ros's and Guil's mission it soon becomes apparent that the phrase has its equivocal, ominous associations.
Disregarded Parallelism

Individuals must vary considerably in their judgment of whether a witty change has been effected in a stock expression or whether the expression is a free creation. A case in point is the last sentence in the following passage, a speech by Ros addressed to the Player:

Ros: You are the pleasures which we draw him on to - (he escapes a fractional giggle but recovers immediately) and by that I don't mean your usual filth; you can't treat royalty like people with normal perverted desires. They know nothing of that and you know nothing of them, to your mutual survival. (p. 46)

When an expression seems to display some kind of regular pattern, principles of parallelism set to work. Thus one automatically adjusts the first half of the sentence somewhat: "They know nothing of you and you know nothing of them". The adjustment brings with it the realization that Ros's phrase "They know nothing of that" is only an empty protestation dictated by the requirements of decorum, and that by his dexterous manipulation of words Ros has in fact left open the question to what extent "royalty" is aware of people's usual "filth". Thus by contriving a slight irregularity in a pattern where some form of parallelism seems to be the guiding principle Stoppard can, at least to some members of his audience, suggest subtleties of viewpoint which would otherwise be unwieldy material in a dialogue. This kind of economy of expression is essential to wit.

Changes in Proverbs

As was pointed out earlier in this study, proverbs occasionally acquire new forms in Beckett. The same phenomenon can be found in R&G in the passage in which Ros is debating whether to seize the opportunity
Ros: Nevertheless, I suppose one might say that this was a chance...One might well... accost him...Yes, it definitely looks like a chance to me...Something on the lines of a direct informal approach...man to man... straight from the shoulder...Now look here, what's it all about...sort of thing. Yes. Yes, this looks like one to be grabbed with both hands, I should say...if I were asked... No point in looking at a gift horse till you see the whites of its eyes, etcetera. (pp. 53-54)

Ros's comic hesitancy takes the form of considerable stereotypy of speech; the clichés 'man to man' and 'straight from the shoulder' reveal his efforts to put on a show of manliness and to muster enough courage to face Hamlet. At the same time Ros is aware that the chance of talking to Hamlet is a godsend, a gift that should be "grabbed with both hands". From the idea of a gift Ros's thoughts move on to a gift that proved fatal, the Trojan horse, which is reflected in his lame proverb "No point in looking at a gift horse". But instead of supplying the usual finish to the proverb, 'in the mouth', he makes a Freudian slip and proceeds to another stock phrase, "till you see the whites of its eyes", which, with its sinister implications, corresponds more accurately to his terror, both conscious and subconscious.

An expansion of a proverb has taken place in the following line by Ros:

Ros: We drift down time, clutching at straws. But what good's a brick to a drowning man? Guil: Don't give up, we can't be long now. (p. 78)

Here the original proverb has been divided into two, each half receiving a new, expanded spectrum. The overall effect in this case is not uniform; in the first half the poetic image of people drifting down the river or stream of time, in vain trying to clutch
at fleeting moments and vanishing chances, is uninterrupted. In the second half the violent image of a brick is added to the equally violent image of a drowning man. So the original proverb is transformed, with a new expanded lyricism in one half and added violence, mixed with farce, in the other. Guil's ambiguous "we can't be long now" is only meant to buoy up Ros's hopes; but since the frame-story of Hamlet is known to the audience, Guil's line cannot but act as a continuation of the lyrical moment, joining Guil's quiet resignation to Ros's desperation.

Conflated Idioms

Two set idioms, 'to cross one's bridges' and 'to burn one's boats' (the latter is included in Partridge's A Dictionary of Clichés), are conflated in the following manner by Guil in one of his speeches:

Guil: We cross our bridges when we come to them and burn 'em behind us, with nothing to show for our progress except a memory of the smell of smoke, and a presumption that once our eyes watered. (p. 43)

Besides conflation, expansion of the original idioms has also taken place, resulting in a kind of extended metaphor. Whether or not one wants to argue that the passage is a confirmation of Stoppard's nihilistic vision, comparable to the simple disappearance of Ros and Guil at the end of the play the poetic element in it remains undeniable: the mixture of pain and regret, "under control", in the passage far exceeds the image of 'crossed bridges' and 'burnt boats' in the original idioms. The passage marks one of the lyrical moments in the play which, as they come between scenes of farce and hidden tragedy, give R&G its special poignancy.
**Jumbled Clichés**

There are two occasions on which stereotyped expressions in R&G undergo a particularly drastic change: they seem to disintegrate, only to be assembled almost at random. Anthony Callen must have had these "jumbled clichés" in mind when he wrote about the similarity between R&G and WFG as follows: "Clichés are jumbled in both plays to convey the characters' bewilderment, and their confusion is often shown by having them talk at cross purposes". Whilst Beckett's "jumbled clichés" in WFG are mainly restricted to proverbs, their counterparts in Stoppard's play show a much more fundamental disorder. On the two occasions when Ros and Guil resort to the use of "jumbled clichés" they are in turn near their breaking-point. The first time occurs after their first meeting with Claudius and Gertrude and the second after Hamlet's disappearance with the pirates. The passages are quoted below in their chronological order:

Ros: I want to go home.
Guil: Don't let them confuse you.
Ros: I'm out of my step here -
Guil: We'll soon be home and high - dry and home - I'll -
Ros: It's all over my depth -
Guil: - I'll hie you home and -
Ros: - out of my head -
Guil: - dry you high and -
Ros (cracking, high): - over my step over my head body! - I tell you it's all stopping to a death, it's boding to a depth, stepping to a head, it's all heading to a dead stop -
Guil (the nursemaid): There!...and we'll soon be home and dry...and high and dry...(p. 27)
Guil (worked up): Can't you see - the pirates left us home and high - dry and home - drome- (furiously). The pirates left us high and dry!
Player (comforting): There...(p. 87)

It is possible to discern elements of several stereotyped expressions in the first passage, most of them giving vent to unformulated fears and half-conscious forebodings of dire disasters, idioms and clichés
like 'I'm out of my depth here', 'we'll be left high and dry', 'things are coming to a head', 'it's boding death', 'over my dead body', etc. The panic-stricken note of the urgent desire to "hie home" rings through the passage, echoed in the sound patterns of 'high', 'I', 'my' and 'dry', and partly repeated in the second passage. The first passage contains words like 'depth' and 'high' which again, considering the later vicissitudes of Ros's and Guil's lives, could have macabre overtones. In each case one of the participants in the conversation tries to comfort the other one, using the word "There", often spoken to a child beset by irrational fears or irrational outbursts of temper. These two passages offer the clearest examples of Stoppard's "jumbled cliché", which is an apt stylistic device to show not only the characters' bewilderment, but also the victory of the irrational at the moments when their defences are low, when they are most in the grip of their conscious or subconscious fear.

It can be noted that the above samples of Stoppard's verbal wit are somewhat disparate in character; the only unifying factor in all these cases is that they represent some kind of novelty introduced into a stereotyped pattern such as a phrase, an idiom, a collocation or a proverb. It can also be noted that Stoppard's witticisms are not nonsensical like, for instance, Simpson's "are you dentally fit?", which in its context could be interpreted as an absurd version of the question "Are you mentally fit?". Even Stoppard's "jumbled clichés" remain lucid enough to be a transparent expression of the characters' subconscious fears. Basically the method produces comic or farcical music-hall effects. Occasionally Stoppard's 'deviant' expressions evoke a complex response; they may have undertones of sombre forebodings, reflecting the various gruesome elements of the Hamlet story; they may even be poetic at times.
That Tom Stoppard has retained a special liking for the method discussed above could be illustrated by some examples taken from one of his latest plays, *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*. The inspector's speech is at times ablaze with stereotyped expressions; Stoppard draws out the comic absurdity inherent in many of them by blatant misuse as in the following which could be cited as a classroom example of the horrors of the mixed metaphor:

Inspector: - A few years ago you suddenly had it on toast, but when they gave you an inch you overplayed your hand and rocked the boat so they pulled the rug from under you and now you're in the doghouse...

Again familiar expressions are metamorphosed through comical new twists (the first example below is particularly appropriate on the stage):

Inspector: - Well, between you and me and these three walls and especially the ceiling, barking up the wrong tree comes under anti-state agitation.
Well, a lot of water has passed through the Penal Code since then.

The fact that the Inspector, who is a sinister figure in the play, is the mouthpiece for many of the comic quips, shows that the humour represented by such quips is not restricted to exclusively sympathetic characters in Stoppard's plays.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1 Leech, p. 23.

2 The interview "Ambushes for the Audience", p. 6.

3 Stoppard's nihilistic vision has been commented on by Anthony Callen in his article "Stoppard's Godot: Some French Influences on Post-War English Drama. Callen argues that WFG is "far more intense an experience than the baroque R&G". An important factor is "Beckett's humanity. He has stripped his characters of all illusions, all hope, and yet shows them waiting still. His vision is not the nihilistic one expressed by Stoppard when he has his characters simply vanish" (p. 30).

4 Callen, p. 27.


7 Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth, p. 57.

8 Ibid., p. 59.
CHAPTER III

PROVERBS IN HAMLET

The two preceding chapters dealt with some aspects of stereotyped language in The Caretaker, WFG and R&G respectively, and Stoppard's technique of introducing new variations into old language patterns in R&G. The present chapter is an attempt to widen the perspective in another direction to include one aspect of the language in the parent play, Hamlet. The aspect in question is Shakespeare's treatment of proverbs, proverbs being potentially stereotyped expressions. Many well-known Shakespeare quotations are in fact proverbs; as was mentioned earlier on in this study, Zijderveld counted many Shakespeare quotations among modern clichés. The aim here is to point out some gleanings of Shakespearean scholarship pertinent to the question how Shakespeare, of whom we often think as a coiner of felicitous phrases, treated potentially stereotyped language, in this case proverbs.

The concept 'stereotyped language' might seem almost offensive, or at least entirely out of place in connection with Shakespeare's plays. We are here concerned with the playwright with perhaps the most creative mind in the history of drama. The words 'creative' and 'inventive' are particularly appropriate epithets of Hamlet, which, to cite Maurice Charney, "is certainly his most unlimited, most unconventional, and most stylistically inventive play".1 Maurice Charney quotes Alfred Hart's findings as follows: "Hamlet has more than 600 fresh or previously unused words, nearly 400 of which do not recur in any later play. About 170 of these fresh words appear for the first time in English literature, and the 3882 words of Hamlet constitute the "largest and most ex-
pressive vocabulary" in Shakespeare".2 Dover Wilson writes in the Introduction to his Cambridge edition of Hamlet as follows:

Owing partly to Shakespeare's vocabulary, which seems richer here than ever before or after, partly to Hamlet's riddling habit of speech, which Shakespeare took over from his source with the 'antic disposition' and greatly elaborated, and partly to what Johnson called the "excellent variety" of the scenes, which embrace almost every side of Elizabethan life, Hamlet stands in more need of commentary than any other play.

Shakespeare's "infinite variety" in Hamlet has made the play, to quote Dover Wilson, "the crossroads of Shakespearean criticism, at which all the highways and every conceivable lane and fieldpath seem to converge".3

Great stylistic variety does not necessarily exclude the utilization of language patterns which, following the practice adopted in this study, could be labelled stereotyped speech forms. Modern readers tend to forget the extent to which Shakespeare had absorbed the current, perhaps in some cases trite, language patterns of his day, to reproduce them in his plays. The following fragment of speech, which is spoken by Hamlet after his confrontation with the Ghost, bears witness to Shakespeare's avid exploitation of everyday speech in its most stereotyped forms as it was used in his day:

As, 'Well, well, we know', or 'We could an
if we would', Or 'If we list to speak', or 'There be an if they might', (1.5.176-77)

The main concern here, however, is Shakespeare's treatment of proverbs. M.P. Tilley's A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries shows clearly Shakespeare's unique position in this field.4 All Shakespeare's works contain proverbs and passages based on proverbs, and
Hamlet has the highest number of them, 140 altogether, followed closely by Love's Labours Lost. Although Tilley occasionally quotes from fifteenth-century sources, he mainly restricts his monumental collection to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, making no claim that the earliest source quoted represents the time of coinage or the likely "author". The following brief survey of Shakespeare's treatment of proverb material in Hamlet is based on Tilley's dictionary, with an occasional glance at the comments of some Shakespearean editors, mainly Dover Wilson. Hilda M. Hulme's Explorations in Shakespeare's Language will be also referred to.

Proverbs with No Earlier Source than Shakespeare

In view of the many cherished quotations popularly ascribed to Shakespeare it comes as a surprise to find that such quotations are often mutations of old themes and sayings and can have a long line of ancestry of their own. In Hamlet the number of proverbial passages to which Tilley quotes no earlier source than Shakespeare is relatively low, and even in cases in which Shakespeare represents the earliest source the implication is not that he is the actual "inventor" of the proverb. As can be seen from Tilley's definition of a proverb, he vigorously rejects the notion of the Elizabethan proverb as exclusively a "saying of the folk", but on the other hand, to prove undisputed authorship in more than a few isolated cases seems to be beyond the scope of scholarship.

The most illustrious of the passages in Hamlet which have attained to proverbial status and which Tilley ascribes to no earlier source than Shakespeare is Polonius' happy observation "brevity is the soul of wit" (2.2.90; Tilley B652). Hamlet's metaphor from the game of bowls, "there's the rub" (3.1.65; Tilley
R196) is similarly widely known. Proverbial similes, in Elizabethan literature first recorded in Shakespeare, include the phrases "as chaste as ice" (3.1.138; Tilley II) and "as swift as thought"; the latter occurs in Hamlet in the passage "that I with wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love, may sweep to my revenge" (1.5.29-31; Tilley T240) and is used in different versions in no less than ten plays besides Hamlet and The Rape of Lucrece (The Rape of Lucrece probably contains the earliest Elizabethan instance of the simile). Many other felicitous phrases, readily associated with Shakespeare, are unlikely to have originated with him. The proverbial "primrose path of dalliance" (Hamlet 1.3.50), or the "primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire" (Macbeth 2.3.19-20), a phrase based on a biblical passage (Matt. VII 13-14), must have been, according to Bernhard Lott, editor of the New Swan Shakespeare series, a set phrase in Shakespeare's day. No source prior to Shakespeare is indicated for the phrase "to turn Turk" (Hamlet 3.2.276, Much Ado About Nothing 3.4.57; Tilley T609), but considering the awe with which European imagination had been struck by the advance of the Ottoman Empire for centuries and the superstitious fear of everything foreign or remote in the popular mind, it seems reasonable to assume that the phrase originated in a mind less sophisticated than Shakespeare's. Occasionally Tilley quotes a late seventeenth-century proverb, accompanied by a Shakespearean passage which would appear to be the likely origin of the proverb. A case in point is the proverb "What are you good for? To stop bottles?" (Tilley B549), in all likelihood inspired by one of Hamlet's gloomy speeches in the graveyard scene: "Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bung-hole?" (5.1.198-99). Apart from the few cases discussed above the proverbs or proverbial phrases in Hamlet to which no source prior to Shakespeare has been found by Tilley are not
very well known today.

Changes in Proverbs

It seems to be an inherent feature of Tilley's enterprise that the connection between a proverbial passage in an author and what could be called the parent proverb is sometimes tenuous. As Hereward T. Price expresses it, "Proverbs are not easy to recognize, and only an expert can collect them". Tilley himself comments on the birth of a proverb: "The typical popular proverb is an old truth concisely and often adroitly worded. Generations file the phrase until it is brief and sharp. Concentrated and profound proverbs often become jewels of prose". In many cases it was Shakespeare who lent the final magic touch to a proverb. "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (Hamlet 1.2.146) is the memorable form given by Shakespeare to the rather quotidian version "A woman's mind is always mutable" (Tilley W674) - the latter being one of the remarkably large number of Elizabethan proverbs derogatory to women. The Shakespearean innovation may occasionally represent such a radical change from the original that the question arises whether we are presented with a new coinage rather than a new version of an old proverb. Such is the case with one of the best-known passages from Hamlet, "For 'tis the sport to have the enginer Hoist with his own petar" (3.4.206 - 7). Tilley traces the passage back to two different parent proverbs current in Shakespeare's day: "The fowler is caught in his own net" (Tilley F626) and "He is beaten at his own weapon" (Tilley W204). Polonius' Machiavellian phrase "By in­directions find directions out" (2.1.63) has similarly overshadowed the earlier version, found, for instance, in Francis Bacon, "Tell a lye to know a truth"(Tilley L237). Often the change effected in an old proverb is a slight one; in the First Gravedigger's line "Cudgel
thy brains no more about it" (5.1.56) the verb "cudgel" might represent a Shakespearean innovation, the earlier instance of the proverb having the verb "beat" in its stead (Tilley B602); Shakespeare's version has gained in lively detail.

Instead of giving an old proverb a more memorable or succinct form, Shakespeare may expand or elaborate his material, occasionally beyond all recognition. As he often used the same proverb in several of his plays it is possible to see in these cases how he adapted the proverb to suit the dramatic situation or to meet the requirements of his blank verse. The proverb "Murder will out" (Tilley M1315) is found in the following two versions in Hamlet: "Foul deeds will rise, Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes" (1.2.257-58) and "For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ" (2.2.597-98). Besides Hamlet the proverb occurs in four of Shakespeare's plays; in Twelfth Night it is used for the purpose of romantic love: "A murd'rous guilt shows not itself more soon Than love that would seem hid" (Twelfth Night, 3.1.159-60). The proverb "To cry with one eye and to laugh with the other" (Tilley E248) is expanded by Claudius as follows: "our queen... Have we as 'twere with a defeated joy, With an auspicious, and a dropping eye, With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage, In equal scale weighing delight and dole, Taken to wife" (1.2.10-15); the proverb is the more appropriate in its context since it is apparent from the examples given by Tilley that a similar proverb was used in the sixteenth century of the dissembled mourning of heirs. In The Winter's Tale the implication of dissembling is absent: "She had one eye declin'd for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfill'd" (The Winter's Tale, 5.2.80). Partly the dramatic situation, partly the couplet form is responsible for the expansion of the proverb "Every dog has his day" (Tilley D464) in
the following lines by Hamlet: "Let Hercules himself do what he may, The cat will mew, the dog will have his day" (5.1.285-86); from Tilley's quotations it can be seen that the proverb, which implied a desire for revenge, was current in the sixteenth century: for instance, it was used by Princess Elizabeth in 1550. "A man is nothing but worms' meat" (Tilley M253), a saying traced back to St Bernard by Tilley, is used by Shakespeare in three plays besides Hamlet; Hamlet, in his exchange with Claudius after the killing of Polonius, dwells on the topic at some length: "your worm is your only emperor for diet, we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table - that's the end" (4.3.21-24).

Proverb - Puns

Some proverbs undergo a special kind of change in Shakespeare: they become puns. Perhaps the best-known of them in Hamlet is the first line spoken by the hero: "A little more than kin, and less than kind" (1.2.65). Hamlet's utterance brings into play three meanings of the word 'kind' in Elizabethan English and could thus contain simultaneously a hint at Hamlet's uncertain succession to the throne, the incestuous nature of Claudius' marriage and the strained family-relationships. The earlier versions recorded by Tilley, e.g., Lyly's from the year 1594, lack the punning element. Lyly wrote: "The neerer we are in bloud, the further wee must be from loue; and greater the kindred is, the lesse the kindnes must be" (Tilley K38). In Macbeth the proverb has taken the form "The near in blood, the nearer bloody" (Macbeth, 2.3.138-39). The second line spoken by Hamlet in the play, "Not so, my lord, I am too much in the 'son'" (1.2.67) has been generally recognized as a fragment of a proverb in the form of a pun, the reference being to the insult felt by Hamlet
of being called "son" by Claudius and to the proverb idiom 'in the sun', which meant 'out of house and home, disinherited'. The double pun at the centre of one of Hamlet's pregnant quibbles, "I know a hawk from a handsaw" (2.2.383), has been commented on, among others, by Dover Wilson in his edition of Hamlet and by Hilda M. Hulme; an Elizabethan audience could take the words 'hawk' and 'handsaw' as referring either to falconry or to tools. In either case there is a whole complex of meaning, which has been elucidated by Hilda M. Hulme; she has also shown how the meaning here, as often elsewhere in Shakespeare, ties up with the rest of the imagery in the scene. The basic meaning of the proverb is naturally clear: 'I can tell chalk from cheese'. If 'handsaw' is explained as a corruption of 'hernshaw', Hamlet is hinting that he can distinguish the bird of prey from its victim; if 'hawk' and 'handsaw' are interpreted as being tools, the passage becomes Hamlet's comment on Ros's and Guil's behaviour as the King's tools. There is evidence that the proverb in its punning form is Shakespeare's creation; Tilley's earliest quotation is from the year 1600 and reads as follows: "And thinkes shee hath the very Quintescence, Of Quicke conceite, wherin her wits do walke Yet doth not knowe a Buzzard from a Hawlke" (Tilley H226). Maurice Charney has pointed out that another old proverb, "Death is common to all" (Tilley D142), has become a pun in Hamlet: the word 'common' is used in different senses by the Queen and Hamlet:

Queen. Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die, Passing through nature to eternity.
Hamlet. Ay, Madam, it is common. (1.2.72-74)

The associative link between "common" as used by the Queen and Hamlet's veiled hint that to him the Queen's empty pious commonplaces are vulgar is unwittingly provided by the King:
- For what we know must be and is as common
  As any the most vulgar thing to sense.
  Why should we in our peevish opposition
  Take it to heart? (1.2.98-101)

**Fragments of Proverbs**

Shakespeare often transformed his proverb material so completely that scholars have had difficulties in trying to ascertain the parent form. This is especially true of fragments of proverbs or mystifying allusions, which are not uncommon in Shakespeare's plays. One such fragment is the "fishmonger" passage in *Hamlet* (2.2.174); on the basis of the contexts in which 'fishmonger' occurred in Elizabethan literature Dover Wilson explicates 'fishmonger' as a euphemism for 'bawd', the allusion gaining added point as applied to Polonius who is "fishing for secrets". Tilley connects the passage with the proverb-idiom 'to swallow a gudgeon' (Tilley G473), which was paraphrased by John Florio in 1598 as meaning 'To pocket up any wrong, to believe any tale'. So Hamlet's retort to Polonius, "You are a fishmonger", could also have the implication 'you have gudgeons to sell', i.e., 'you try to deceive me'. Another famous crux is the passage "For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion" (2.2.181-82); according to Dover Wilson, Tilley supports Warburton's emendation "being a God, kissing carrion", as there is proverb material about the incorruptible nature of the sun. Hamlet's warning to Polonius concerning Ophelia, "Let her not walk i'th'sun" (2.2.184) Tilley takes as a reference to the proverb "He that walks much in the sun will be tanned at last" (Tilley S972), which imports much the same idea as another Elizabethan proverb, "He that touches pitch shall be defiled" (Tilley P358). In cases in which Shakespeare supplies a recognizable part of a proverb it has been an easier task to provide the rest; so Hamlet's line "Ay, sir, but 'While the grass grows!..." (3.2.344-45)
beginning of a proverb the latter part of which, quoted, e.g., by Whetstone in 1578, was "oft sterves the seely steede". Tilley emphasizes the importance of proverb "splinters" and "slight floating" allusions in Elizabethan writers: "For the Renaissance such dexterously evasive hints constituted one of the chief beauties of style".

Comic Proverbs

Did Shakespeare ever utilize the comic or satirical possibilities latent in proverbs in the same way as Stoppard does when conflating two set phrases to form the mock proverb "No point in looking at a gift horse till you see the whites of its eyes?" There is an instance in Hamlet of "a satirical condensation" of a passage from The True Tragedy of Richard III, a revenge play printed in a garbled version in 1594; the first half of the passage is proverbial (Tilley R33):

The screeking Rauen sits croking for reuenge.
Whole heards of beasts comes bellowing for reuenge.

Dover Wilson in his edition of Hamlet points out that Hamlet's exhortation to the Player "Come - 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge' " (3.2.253-54) is an ironical reference to "a stock absurdity of the revenge drama", and it would have been recognized as such by Shakespeare's audience.

Strings of Proverbs

Shakespeare's use of proverb material occasionally took the form of heaping up proverb upon proverb, a feature which he shared with other Elizabethan writers. Tilley points out that Shakespeare employed the device for different effects in different plays; in Richard II the passage consisting of proverbs (2.1.33-39)
"gives strength to the words of a dying prince", whereas in similar passages in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.9-15) and *Hamlet* (1.3.59-80), where the proverbs "illustrate the character of the speaker, it is unlikely that Shakespeare intended the use of these hackneyed proverbs to indicate a high degree of intelligence". \(^\text{15}\) According to Dover Wilson, the fact that the *Hamlet* passage, Polonius' advice to Laertes before the imminent departure of the latter to France, bears similarity to precepts left by Elizabethan fathers like Sir Henry Sidney to their sons and to the advice given by Euphues to Philautus in *Euphues*, has been noted by several scholars. \(^\text{16}\) Dover Wilson's interpretation of the passage deviates somewhat from Tilley's: "Shakespeare evidently intended the speech as an epitome of paternal worldly wisdom; every precept is hedged with caution and pointed with self-interest". In this case it is possible to draw a slight parallel between the *Hamlet* passage and a passage in *R&G; Guildenstern*'s speech after the discovery that Claudius' letter was in fact Hamlet's death warrant undoubtedly reveals both caution and self-interest, although the theme is entirely different:

Guil: Well, yes, and then again no. (Airily). Let's keep things in proportion. Assume, if you like, that they're going to kill him. Well, he is a man, he is mortal, death comes to us all, etcetera, and consequently he would have died anyway, sooner or later. Or to look at it from the social point of view - he's just one man among many, the loss would be well within reason and convenience. And then again, what is so terrible about death? As Socrates so philosophically put it, since we don't know what death is, it is illogical to fear it. It might be...very nice. Certainly it is a release from the burden of life, and, for the godly, a haven and a reward. Or to look at it another way - we are little men, we don't know the ins and outs of the matter, there are wheels within wheels, etcetera - it would be presumptuous of us to interfere with the designs of fate or even of kings. All in all, I think we'd be well advised to leave well alone. (p. 79-80)
The passage would not now be regarded as consisting mainly of proverbs; however, Guil's elegantly phrased platitudes give the appearance of having the sanction of generations behind them. The string of proverb-like platitudes in Guil's speech is hardly intended to give an appearance of either worldly wisdom or a low degree of intelligence; the passage is undoubtedly comic, the comedy being the outcome of the tension between Guil's intellectual pretensions and his complete lack of originality in the face of an impending crisis.

To summarize the above findings it can be stated that Shakespeare used proverb material in *Hamlet* in many different ways. The exuberance and variety of his language is mirrored in the way proverbs assumed new forms according to the requirements of the dramatic situation or his blank verse. In this context it has to be remembered, however, that Elizabethan proverbs probably had more fluid forms than proverbs of today. Some proverbs became puns in Shakespeare's plays, some appeared in fragmented forms and proverbs could even constitute an almost entire passage.

Since *R&G* contains only a few proverbs, it is naturally irrelevant to try to draw parallels between *Hamlet* and *R&G* here. If we consider, however, that many Elizabethan proverbs were what we would call idioms and phrases today it can be argued that some of the principles at work in *Hamlet* can also be seen (albeit on a very minor scale compared to *Hamlet*) at work in *R&G*. Stoppard effects changes in set idioms (in his case the changes are always comic or witty), uses fragments of idioms for certain dramatic effects and has passages containing a high number of stereotyped expression.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


2 Ibid.; the findings are from Alfred Hart, Vocabularies of Shakespeare's Plays, RES XIX (1943):135.

3 Hamlet, ed. Dover Wilson (Cambridge, 1934), p. VIII. The references to Hamlet in this study will be to Dover Wilson's edition.


5 Tilley comments on his use of the term 'proverb' as follows: "There is no agreement on what constitutes a proverb. In this collection of proverbs, proverbial phrases and proverbial similes I have entered such material as the writers in the period 1500 to 1700 included in their elastic conception of what was proverbial. Obviously this contemporary conception transcends the limited definition of a proverb as a saying of the folk" (Foreword, p. V). Many of Tilley's samples would be classified nowadays as simply idioms and phrases.


7 According to my calculations there are fewer than twenty proverbial passages in Hamlet to which no earlier source than Shakespeare has been ascribed.

8 Tilley, p. V.

9 Ibid., p. VI.

10 Another possible meaning of the phrase 'in the sun', ignored by critics so far, might be simply 'drunk'. According to Tilley, John Ray in his A Collection of English Proverbs from the year 1678 gives the above paraphrase to the idiom 'He has been in the sun' (Tilley 970). The fact that there is a time lag of over seventy years between the composition of Hamlet and the publication of Ray's collection does not necessarily disqualify the above proposition; in her Explorations in Shakespeare's Language Hilda M. Hulme occasionally evokes evidence
recorded over sixty years after the Shakespearean passage under discussion (see, e.g., Explorations, pp. 43-44). The possible explanation for the reluctance of critics to admit the connection between a seventeenth century proverb and Hamlet's quibble might be that the idea of drunkenness is felt to be too ludicrous to fit the context of tragedy. The fact remains that soon after the quoted passage Hamlet, in his conversation with Horatio, refers to the habitual drunkenness of the Danes (1.2.175) and speaks at length of the same habit again in the Ghost scene (1.4.8-22). Could it not have been that Hamlet, not only the hero, but also the clown of the play in his "antic disposition", extracted an extra laugh from Elizabethan groundlings by appearing half tipsy at his first entrance? In the heyday of absurd drama, is it not time for Hamlet the Romantic to make his exit and for Hamlet the Drunk to enter?

11 Hulme, pp. 54-61.
12 Charney, pp. 286-87.
14 Tilley, p. VII
15 Ibid., pp. VII-VIII.
16 Hamlet, ed. Dover Wilson, p. 155.
CHAPTER IV

PUNNING IN HAMLET AND ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

M.M. Mahood opens her book Shakespeare's Wordplay with the following remark: "Wordplay was a game the Elizabethans played seriously". The practice was authorized by venerable tradition, such as Scripture, rhetoricians from Aristotle to Quintilian, and the textbooks that were compulsory reading at school. The fact that attitudes to punning have not remained constant through different literary periods is well reflected in Dr Johnson's famous statement that a quibble was to Shakespeare "the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it".

To the Augustans punning was a low form of wit, contrary to their aims to make language lucid and rational, and they sometimes tried to purge it, with varying success, from their prose and poetry. The majority of the Victorians shared the Augustans' distrust of punning and relegated it to the nursery; M.M. Mahood writes: "Jabberwocky could be enjoyed only at seven and a half exactly". Our age has, at least to some extent, revived the interest in wordplay as can be seen from the quibbling of such playwrights as Tom Stoppard. M.M. Mahood comments on the present attitude to Shakespeare's puns as follows:

A generation that relishes Finnegans Wake is more in danger of reading non-existent quibbles into Shakespeare's work than of missing his subtlest play of meaning. Shakespearean criticism today recognizes wordplay as a major poetic device, comparable in its effectiveness with the use of recurrent or clustered images.

To spot Shakespearean puns naturally requires a thorough knowledge of Elizabethan English, and some modern critics might, as M.M. Mahood warns, err on the
Punning as a linguistic phenomenon is one aspect of the general ambiguity of language. Polysemy and homonymy provide prolific sources of puns. S. Ullman divides puns into implicit and explicit categories, the ambiguity being implicit when a word is mentioned only once but carries two or more meanings which the reader has to decipher for himself, whereas a pun is made explicit by repeating the same word in a different meaning or by commenting on the ambiguity. S. Ullman agrees that "punning is in many cases a low form of wit", conceding, however, that

it is perfectly clear that word-play brings an element of ease and suppleness into the handling of language and that, if used with discretion, it can provide a valuable vehicle for humour and irony, emphasis and contrast, allusion and innuendo, and a variety of other stylistic effects.

Hamlet

Hamlet, being one of Shakespeare's most complex plays in regard to language, contains a large number of puns; Dover Wilson in his Cambridge edition points out almost seventy of them, which is a higher number than in any of the other tragedies by Shakespeare. The character who quibbles most is Hamlet, followed by Claudius and Polonius.

Thematic Punning

M.M. Mahood's avowed task in her book is to show how the wordplay in Hamlet "contributes to the dramatic realization of a psychological conflict: the conflict between the demands of an accepted ethical code and Hamlet's particular vision of evil"., the vision of evil as something ineradicable, "the very condition of our birth". The hostility between the King and Hamlet finds outlet in pregnant puns from their first
encounter onwards, starting with Hamlet's "kin-kind" and "son-sun" quibbles. Even the Queen seems to make a veiled comment on the aggressive stance adopted by Hamlet in the following:

Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust
(1.2. 70-71)

where 'vailed', according M.M. Mahood, means not only 'lowered', but also 'availed', i.e., 'having the beaver down ready for combat'. The King's seemingly conciliatory exhortation that Hamlet remain in Elsinore contains a menacing equivocation:

For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire,
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.
(1.2.112-17)

The fourth line in the speech is ambiguous and can mean 'we beg you to be so inclined as to stay' or 'we beg you, we compel you to stay'. "Retrograde" and "bend" can be taken in their astrological meanings, in which case Claudius' request becomes a disguised assertion of the royal prerogative, and Hamlet is ordered to remain 'stationary- like the earth'. The pun 'heir-air' is used twice with possible aggressive implications by Hamlet. As Dover Wilson has pointed out, towards the end of the play Claudius combines in one of his puns sinister deception with aggressive sport; when he tells Laertes, "you may choose A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice Requite him for your father" (4.7.136-38), "pass of practice" may be either 'a bout for exercise' or 'a treacherous thrust', the noun 'practice' often having connotations of deceit in Elizabethan English. At Ophelia's grave the King makes further covert threats against Hamlet's life in his aside to Laertes:

We'll put the matter to the present push...
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living monument. (5.1.289-91)

"Push" may mean either 'test' or 'rapier-thrust', whilst the "living monument" is either an 'enduring memorial' or a 'prodigious event', i.e., Hamlet's death. Thus the succession of threats and counter-threats in a punning form signifies accumulating violence through the play.

Clusters of Puns

In the above examples the puns (except for the astrological cluster) were single instances and implicit puns. Quite often Shakespeare's puns occur in clusters, connected through strong associative links. So, for instance, in the following passage, in which Polonius warns Ophelia against Hamlet:

Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers
Not of that dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds
The better to beguile...(1.3.127-31)

The underlined words in the passage all pertain to clothing (a broker could be a second-hand clothes dealer, and in the "pious bonds" there could be a suggestion of a clergyman's bands), which is appropriate since mystification and disguise are Polonius' stock-in-trade. Often one kind of imagery quite naturally leads to a pun related to it, as in the following exchange between Polonius and the King:

Polonius. Give first admittance to th'am-bassadors. My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.
King. Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in. (2.2.51-53)

Polonius' welcoming ceremony is here equated with saying grace before a meal, "that great feast". Explicit puns naturally form a tightly-knit associative
Cluster; the different meanings of a word may serve in different grammatical functions, as in the following passage in which Polonius gives a free rein to his rhetorical affectation and courtly wit:

- think yourself a baby
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly, Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, Running it thus) you'll tender me a fool. (1.3.105-9)

"Tender me a fool" could, according to Edward Dowden, have the additional meaning 'present me with a baby', since 'fool' in Elizabethan English could be a word of endearment and could be applied to a baby. In one of his speeches in the graveyard Hamlet quibbles on four meanings of the word "fine":

is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? (5.1.103-5)

Characters' Mental Processes and Punning

Hamlet's punning affords an interesting testing ground for Freud's thesis that verbal wit functions as a safe outlet for repressed impulses. Apart from the "antic disposition" assumed by Hamlet, which often takes the form of verbal extravaganza, Hamlet's profoundest anxieties and his revulsion against human nature are reflected in his puns. M.M. Mahood notes that Shakespeare's characters often pun profusely when in a state of high emotional tension: "Hamlet lets off flashes of wordplay in the thunderous atmosphere of the Play Scene, and once his plot to catch the conscience of the King has succeeded he gives his triumphant feelings vent in a topical flight full of puns".

On the other hand, the acknowledgement of the psychological aspects of punning should not blind one to the fact that wordplay and clowning were often an integral part of Elizabethan tragedy; the companies had clowns for whom witty lines had to be written, and
the audience delighted in wordplay and expected it. As Hamlet shares the burden of comic entertainment with the gravediggers in the play, his double entendres in the play scene are as much dictated by the needs of the Elizabethan tradition of comedy-within-tragedy as they are by Hamlet's need to find relief for his deep frustrations and his bitter resentment of his mother's conduct.

There is also a danger that the attempt to tie up punning closely with the mental processes of a character may lead to an overeager identification of puns. That may be the case with the wordplay as it is expounded by M.M. Mahood in Hamlet's "to be or not to be" soliloquy. M.M. Mahood argues that the word "devoutly" in the line "'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wished to die to sleep", in addition to its obvious sense, "serves to conjure up the whole after-life conceived by the devout". Hamlet's "undiscovered "country" is undiscovered "not only in being unrevealed, undisclosed to the living, but also in the sense that we have no proof that those who began the journey ever reached their goal". On the basis of this subtle punning M.M. Mahood labels Hamlet as a modern sceptic: "The safest refuge from the kind of moral shock Hamlet has sustained is a sweeping scepticism". Dover Wilson does not recognize the above puns and joins Edward Dowden in believing that, at the point when the soliloquy was spoken, Hamlet had given up all belief in the "honesty" of the Ghost, and that Shakespeare wrote the line "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn No traveller returns" to make this clear to the audience.

The above brief outline of Shakespeare's punning in Hamlet is mainly meant to serve as a frame of reference for Tom Stoppard's modern punning. In this context we could also point out punning conventions least likely to be imitated by modern playwrights, e.g.,
Latin derivations and portmanteau words. Hamlet contains examples of both kinds. The famous crux of "solid" versus "sullied" or "sallied" in Hamlet's line "O, that this too too sullied (or sallied, solid) flesh would melt" (1.2.129) is according to M.M. Mahood a portmanteau word, i.e., a fusion of the words in question.\textsuperscript{16} Modern fixed spelling has, of course, made this kind of quibbling impossible.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

Compared with Shakespeare's sophisticated punning on a massive scale Tom Stoppard's punning must needs appear almost negligible. Subtleties of characterization and eruptions to the surface of subconscious tensions have largely, albeit not entirely, disappeared from his puns and given way to simple music-hall comedy.

Phrasal Puns

At the formal level it can be noted that Stoppard's puns are seldom single words as Shakespeare's are in most cases; rather, they are ambiguous phrases or idioms, or dead metaphors which in Stoppard's usage have a tendency to revert to type, i.e., to their original literal meaning. Shakespeare is by no means a stranger to this type of phrasal punning; Hamlet, when he is about to leave his mother's closet dragging Polonius' body, makes the following remark: "Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you..." (3.4.216). Hilda M. Hulme has observed the same phenomenon in Shakespeare's proverbs: "Instead of there being double meaning within the detail of the proverb, there may be, as it were, a pun in its application; the figurative idiom may be turned back to its literal use".\textsuperscript{17} Hilda M. Hulme's examples do not include any from Hamlet, but the one taken from The Tempest is illuminating: "In the proverb idiom 'by line and
level', meaning 'by measure', 'line' is clearly the builder's cord, and Trinculo accordingly makes the obvious jest "we steale by lyne and leauell" as they take the "glistening apparell" from where it hangs on a line outside Prospero's cell (Tempest IV I 239)." Stephano's Praising emphasizes the poverty of the witticism; the joke in these cases is often "deliberately unsubtle".

Deliberate unsubtlety also characterizes much of Stoppard's phrasal punning. A typical example is Ros's line (repeated by the "bemused" Guil) "The toenails on the other hand never grow at all" (p. 13). The humour is seldom, however, entirely unsophisticated. "And so here you are - with a vengeance" (p. 46), quips Guil when the Player and the Tragedians catch up with Ros and Guil at Elsinore, understandably somewhat cold and vengeful after having been, as we gather, deserted by the two in the middle of a performance. "Aha! All in the same boat, then!" (p. 82) are the Player's first words as he emerges out of his hiding-place as a stowaway on board the boat taking them all to England. 'In the same boat' is indeed an apt metaphor for a situation in which people, like Hamlet and his two escorts, share not only a boat but a death warrant as well, or, as actors of Hamlet's drama, share them by proxy, like the Tragedians. While Ros and Guil are engaged in their various manoeuvres to "seek out" the homicidal Hamlet, Ros takes a step towards the wings and halts whereupon Guil remarks, "Well, that's a step in the right direction" (p. 63). The remark is the more comic because it is in obvious contrast to the ineffectuality of the two protagonists' moves. The phrase "to our cost" in the Player's line "We learn something everyday, to our cost" (p. 83) has also been turned back to its literal use; the Tragedians had learned that it does not pay to offend kings, as they had not been paid for their performance,
and also that it can be expensive to learn one's numbers by betting. In the following passage there is an explicit pun involving the phrase 'all right':

Ros: Are we all right for England?
Player: You look all right to me. I don't think they're very particular in England. (p. 83)

Ros is here mainly concerned with finding out whether their boat is on course. The Player, however, seizes upon the least obvious one of the possible interpretations to make a facetious remark about England, in line with Shakespeare's disparaging quip in *Hamlet* (5.1.144-50).

Like the puns in *Hamlet* which mark the accumulating hostility between Claudius and Hamlet, the phrasal puns in *R&G* are at times vehicles of grim forebodings, foreshadowing the inevitable conclusion of the *Hamlet*-story. The dialogue between Guil or Ros and the Player contains several such phrases, usually spoken by the Player. Newly arrived at Elsinore, Guil tells the Player, "We're still finding our feet", and gets the brusque reply, "I should concentrate on not losing your heads" (p. 47). After a long ride the phrase 'finding one's feet' may also be an accurate description in more than one sense. After the Tragedians' abortive "dress rehearsal", interwoven with scenes from *Hamlet*, Guil and the Player are again engaged in a discussion; the phrases 'over your dead body' and 'to take something lying down' have reverted to their ominous literal meanings:

Player: Act Two! Positions!
Guil: Wasn't that the end?
Player: Do you call that an ending? - with practically everyone on his feet? My goodness no - over your dead body.
Guil: How am I supposed to take that?
Player: Lying down. - (p. 57)

Punning and the ambiguity it involves are tied up with the existence of multiple levels of knowledge and
multiple levels of interpretation. Stoppard's phrasal puns, which can be grasped at either a literal or metaphorical level, increase the general atmosphere of ambiguity, uncertainty and confusion that characterizes the two courtiers' universe. Such uncertainty and confusion is evident in the following exchange:

Guil: I like to know where I am. Even if I don't know where I am, I like to know that. If we go there's no knowing.
Ros: No knowing what?
Guil: If we'll ever come back. (p. 69)

"Where I am" in Guil's first sentence can be interpreted at either a literal or a metaphorical level; Guil is lost both in the context of the play's locality and in the wider context of the forces shaping his destiny. To the ambiguity created through the pun in the first sentence Guil adds referential ambiguity in the third: "there's no knowing" could refer back to the preceding two sentences, but instead Guil gives it a new reference in his answer to Ros: "If we'll ever come back".

Bawdy Punning

Instances of the bawdy comparable to that in Shakespeare are rare in R&G. A double entendre, referring both to Claudius' usurpation and the subsequent royal marriage is used in the scene in which Ros and Guil "delve" into Hamlet's background:

Ros: Usurpation, then.
Guil: He slipped in.
Ros: Which reminds me.
Guil: Well, it would.
Ros: I don't want to be personal.
Guil: It's common knowledge.
Ros: Your mother's marriage.
Guil: He slipped in.
(Beat).
Ros (lugubriously): His body was still warm.
Guil: So was hers. (p. 35)
The noun 'bent', which in *Hamlet* occurs innocuously e.g., in Guil's line "But we both obey, And here give up ourselves in the full bent To lay our service freely at your feet To be commanded" (2.2.29-32), is used twice in R&G with a hint at homosexuality (homosexuality is referred to in *Hamlet* in 2.2.312-20):

Player: - we'll stoop to anything if that's your bent...
   (He regards Ros meaningfully but Ros returns the stare blankly). (p. 17)
Ros: And what's his bent?
Player: Classical.
Ros: Saucy! (p. 47)

The noun 'bent' could be a pun also in Shakespeare, combining a reference to Guil's low bow before the King with its usual meaning 'limit of capacity' from its literal meaning 'the extent to which a bow may be bent or a spring wound up'. The noun 'edge', which in *Hamlet* is used as a double entendre, is in turn innocuous in R&G. The context in *Hamlet* is the play scene:

Ophelia. You are keen, my lord, you are keen.  
Hamlet. It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge. (3.2.247-49)

In R&G the noun occurs in a passage which contains an instance of wordplay in which the idioms 'to make headway', 'to play it close to the chest' and 'to catch somebody on the wrong foot' do double duty in that parts of them, the nouns 'headway', 'chest' and 'foot', form a new metaphor, as it were, a metaphor indicating a diminishing scale of one's self-confidence.

Guil: I think we can say we made some headway.  
Ros: You think so?
Guil: I think we can say that.  
Ros: I think we can say he made us look ridiculous.  
Guil: We played it close to the chest of course.  
Ros (derisively): "Question and answer. Old ways are the best ways"! He was scoring off us all down the line.
Guil: He caught us on the wrong foot once or twice, perhaps, but I thought we gained some ground.
Ros (simply): He murdered us.
Guil: He might have had the edge. (p. 40)

Inspite of Ros's flat assertions to the contrary, Guil defends tenaciously his ill-founded illusion of having got the upper hand of Hamlet in the first round, finding it difficult to concede the victory to the latter. The choice of idioms in the passage is parallel to the gradual diminution of Guil's self-confidence; metaphorically, Guil starts at head level and ends up prostrate on the ground, almost under his own feet, having to make the grudging admission that the enemy's weapons were superior to his own, "He might have had the edge". There is a similar use in Hamlet of the dimensions of the human body to designate the scale of one's fortune; the passage includes some bawdy punning:

Guildenstern. Happy, in that we are not over-happy, On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.
Hamlet. Nor the soles of her shoe?
Rosencrantz. Neither, my lord.
Hamlet. Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?
Guildenstern. Faith, her privates we.
Hamlet. In the secret parts of fortune? O most true, she is a strumpet. (2.2.230-38)

The noun 'waist' is involved in a pun elsewhere in Hamlet, namely in Horatio's line "In the dead waste and middle of the night" (1.2.198); Dover Wilson in his edition points out that Marston parodied the line in his Malcontent: "'Tis now about the immodest waist of night".

Punning and Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings in R&G occasionally add up to a virtual explicit pun. This happens in the scene in which Ros and Guil discuss the letter they are to take to the English king; a frantic search ensues
because each takes the verb 'get' in a different sense.

Ros: So we've got a letter which explains everything.
Guil: You've got it.
(Ros takes that literally. He starts to pat his pockets, etc).
What's the matter?
Ros. The letter.
Guil: Have you got it?
Ros (rising fear): Have I? (Searches frantically). - (p. 76)

In *Hamlet* explicit puns can also result from misunderstandings, in this case deliberate, by Hamlet, as in the following exchange with Polonius:

Polonius. ...What do you read, my lord?
Hamlet. Words, words, words.
Polonius. What is the matter, my lord?
Hamlet. Between who?
Polonius. I mean the matter that you read, my lord. (2.2.191-96)

Another example is the passage in which Hamlet takes the verb 'follow' as referring to the sequence of lines in the "pious chanson" he is singing, whereas Polonius relates it to the logical relation between being called Jephthah and loving one's daughter:

Hamlet. Why
'One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'
Polonius. Still on my daughter.
Hamlet. Am I not i' th'right, old Jephthah?
Polonius. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.
Hamlet. Nay, that follows not.
Polonius. What follows then, my lord?
Hamlet. Why,
'As by lot, God wot,' (2.2.411-21)

**Punning in Clusters**

As was exemplified earlier on in this chapter Shakespeare's puns frequently occur in clusters and can have strong associative links not only with the other members of the cluster but also with the imagery in the passage. Associative cohesion can be also
typical of R&G; one word may lead to another in a playful manner as in the following passage, in which punning, however, is limited to the last two members of the cluster:

Ros: - What do you think he means by remembrance?
Guil: He doesn't forget his friends.
Ros: Would you care to estimate?
Guil: Difficult to say, really - some kings tend to be amnesiac, others I suppose - the opposite, whatever that is...
Ros: Yes - but -
Guil: Elephantine...?
Ros: Not how long - how much?
Guil: Retentive - he's a very retentive king, - a royal retainer... (p. 29)

"Remembrance" leads to "amnesiac" by way of contrast, and since elephants are supposed to have long memories, "amnesiac" finds a new opposite, "elephantine", which is amusingly inappropriate in the context. 'Retentive memory' furnishes Guil with the adjective "retentive", which, when applied to Claudius, attributes not only a retentive memory but also the character trait of meanness to him. The last link in the cluster, "retainer", further detracts from Claudius' character equating him with his servants. Guil's punning thus parallels one of Hamlet's derogatory descriptions of Claudius (3.4.96-103).

There is a feature in Stoppard's language which loosely resembles explicit punning, namely Stoppard's tendency to repeat a word in several contexts within one passage. He thereby achieves many-faceted, shifting patterns of meaning as in the following passage, in which Guil addresses Alfred, the boy tragedian, who is the "price" the Player offers to pay, having lost the bet:

Guil: - - Come here, Alfred.
(Alfred moves down and stands, frightened and small). (Gently). Do you lose often?
Alfred: Yes, sir.
Guil: Then what could you have left to lose?
Alfred: Nothing, sir. (p. 22)
The subtle distinction of meaning between 'lose' in 'losing a bet' and 'having nothing to lose', together with the repetition, is what makes the passage memorable. In the passage below the noun 'question' occurs in two different idioms:

Ros: I remember when there were no questions. Guil: There were always questions. To exchange one set for another is no great matter. Ros: Answers, yes. There were answers to everything. Guil: You've forgotten. Ros (flaring): I haven't forgotten - how I used to remember my own name - and yours, oh yes! There were answers everywhere you looked. There was no question about it -- (p. 28)

The parallels it has been possible to draw between Shakespeare's punning and Stoppard's indirectly show the gulf that separates the Elizabethan practice and that employed by a modern dramatist. The main difference is the scarcity of single-word puns in Stoppard, his speciality being the ambiguity inherent in many phrases and idioms. The same could be said of Beckett; Beckett's punning in WF is also often of the phrasal type as could be illustrated by the following passage, in which "come in" and "on our hands and knees" could be taken either in their metaphorical or literal meanings:


The double meaning is often elusive in Beckett. Is Vladimir still talking about his urinary troubles in the passage below and if not, whose coming or the coming of what is he anticipating? The past participle "relieved", being connected with the phrase 'to relieve oneself' would point to the former interpretation and would itself be a pun:
Vladimir: Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. (He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again). How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time...(he searches for the word)...appalled. - (pp. 10-11).

The persistence of multiple levels throughout the play implies a constant tension between a literal and a symbolic interpretation; only in the case of Vladimir and Estragon the "pun" is never made explicit, and one's interpretation is doomed to remain a matter of personal choice.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


2 To the Augustans the term 'wit' had associations like those treated, e.g., by C.S. Lewis in his Studies in Words (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 86-110. In this study, however, the term is used in the OED meaning 'that quality of speech or writing which consists in the apt association of thought and expression, calculated to surprise and delight by its unexpectedness' or in the sense 'the utterance of brilliant and sparkling things in an amusing way'.

3 Mahood, p. 11.

4 Ibid.


6 Ibid., p. 192.

7 Mahood, p. 113.

8 Ibid., p. 117. The puns that are particularly relevant to Hamlet's vision of evil are mainly found in Hamlet, 1.4.17-38. Mahood's discussion, however, cannot be given in detail here.
9 Mahood, p. 114.

10 Ibid., p. 115.

11 Ibid., p. 119-20.

12 Cf. Dover Wilson's note, Hamlet, p. 156.

13 Mahood, p. 33.

14 Ibid., p. 122.

15 Ibid., p. 123.

16 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

17 Hulme, p. 68.
CHAPTER V

SOME PARALLELS BETWEEN ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD AND WAITING FOR GODOT

In an interview Tom Stoppard once confessed that he was "an enormous admirer of Beckett", freely admitting the existence of "Godotesque element" in R&G. The same interview reveals that Stoppard is not only impressed by Beckett's plays but also by his novels, and these have had a definite influence on his work.¹ In this study the Beckettian influence on R&G is restricted almost exclusively to WFG, one of the most important absurd plays; some parallels between the two plays emerged in connection with stereotypy and some others will be taken up in connection with parody in R&G. The present chapter is an attempt to trace parallels between the two plays, and in some cases between R&G and Beckett's novels, in the use of three techniques, namely, communication which is in some ways flawed, such as misunderstandings and monologues, secondly, the playful treatment of sentence elements and sentence sequence, and finally, the technique of frustrated expectations and deflation or "dismantlement".

Flawed communication

Misunderstandings

The atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty that characterizes the universe of both Stoppard's courtiers and Beckett's tramps often finds expression in misunderstandings frequently based on referential ambiguity involving pronouns. Each play contains instances of such ambiguity:

Guil: We're on our way to England - we're taking Hamlet there.
Ros: What for?
Guil: What for? Where have you been?
Ros: When? (Pause). We won't know what to do when we get there.
Guil: We take him to the king.
Ros: Will he be there?
Guil: No - the king of England. (R&G p. 75)

Vladimir: One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.
Estragon: Who?
Vladimir: What?
Estragon: What's all this about? Abused who?
Vladimir: The Saviour. (WFG p. 13)

In both passages the break-down in communication takes the form of questions being answered by more questions which in the extract from R&G are almost irrelevant, merely marking the courtiers' growing alarm and desperate attempt to master their situation. The misunderstandings can also be profoundly comic as the following passage from R&G will illustrate:

Player: The old man thinks he's in love with his daughter.
Ros (appalled): Good God! We're out of our depth here.
Player: No, no, no - he hasn't got a daughter - the old man thinks he's in love with his daughter.
Ros: The old man is?
Player: Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks. (R&G p. 49)

To clear up the misunderstanding to which his ambiguous pronouns have given rise the Player has to resort to a technique used twice by Beckett in WFG, namely the use of what Niklaus Gessner calls "Telegrammstil" or "Kleinkindersprache". To make communication unambiguous, language has to be broken up into its most basic modules, so to speak, as the Player's clarification, "Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks", seems to imply. In WFG Beckett uses "Telegrammstil" in the hanging episode when Estragon tries to explain to Vladimir why the latter should hang himself first:

Again, after having tried in vain to get an answer to the question why Lucky does not put down his bags, Estragon makes a last effort:

    Estragon: (forcibly). Bags. (He points at Lucky). Why? Always hold. (He sags, panting). Never put down. (He opens his hands, straightens up with relief). Why? (WFG, p. 31)

Having thus broken up language into its basic elements Estragon finally succeeds in securing Pozzo's attention.

When there is a failure in communication, it is promptly corrected by means of an unambiguous answer in WFG as in the following:

    Vladimir: I wonder if he is really blind.
    Estragon: Blind? Who?
    Vladimir: Pozzo. (WFG, p. 90)

In R&G, on the other hand, Stoppard prolongs the comic confusion by making one of the participants proffer clarification which is ludicrously irrelevant. Guîl's repeated "him" in the following passage hardly helps Ros to understand the rules of the question game in which Guîl impersonates Hamlet:

    Guîl: Glean what afflicts him.
    Ros: Me?
    Guîl: Him. (R&G, p. 33)

Equally inadequate is the clarification offered by Ros in the following passage where the need for clarification is due to Guîl's failure to respond and to his slackening powers of concentration, or where his "What?" simply indicates incredulity. Guîl's question concerns the whole of Ros' statement, but, to a highly comic effect, the latter grants extra clarification on minor points which Guîl probably did not find confusing in the first place:

    Ros (cutting his fingernails): Another curious scientific phenomenon is the fact that the fingernails grow after death, as does the beard.
Guil: What?
Ros (loud): Beard!
Guil: But you're not dead.
Ros (irritated): I didn't say they started
to grow after death! (Pause, calmer). The
fingernails also grow before birth, though
not the beard.
Guil: What?
Ros (shouts): Beard! What's the matter with
you? (R&G, pp. 12-13)

Two Monologues instead of Dialogue

There is a feature in WFG, which is related to the
propensity of the dialogue to break up into two
monologues, namely the lack of logical or associative
links between the lines of the speakers. This lack
is evident in many music-hall type passages, and it
reveals the intentional artificiality of the conver­
sation the purpose of which is only to fill the
vacuum encompassing the characters.

It happens time and again in WFG that the connecting
links disappear completely; each character remains
alone, trapped within his own universe, and his words
are neither addressed to his interlocutors nor are
they received by them as meaningful messages. As
Niklaus Gessner has noted, the lines of each speaker
can occasionally be joined together to form a coherent,
independent line of thought.\(^3\) Instances of such mono­
logues are not uncommon in WFG:

Pozzo: Guess who taught me all these beauti­
ful things. (Pause. Pointing to Lucky). My
Lucky!
Vladimir: (looking at the sky). Will night
never come?
Pozzo: But for him all my thoughts, all my
feelings, would have been of common things.
(WFG, p. 33)
Pozzo: I can't find my pulverizer!
Estragon: (faintly). My left lung is very
weak! (He coughs feebly. In ringing tones).
But my right lung is as sound as a bell!
Pozzo: (normal voice). No matter! What was
I saying. (WFG, pp. 40-41)
In R&G the technique of concurrent monologues to emphasize the characters' loneliness and isolation is used very little. Only in the following passage are the characters preoccupied with different things and not listening to each other:

Guil: - Yet he sent for us. And we did come.
Ros (alert, ear cocked): I say! I heard music -
Guil: We're here.
Ros: - Like a band - I thought I heard a band.
(R&G, p. 36)

Otherwise the technique may only show that the characters are trying to advance their viewpoints forcibly in the heat of an argument:

Guil: He had six rhetoricals -
Ros: It was question and answer, all right. Twenty-seven questions he got out in ten minutes, and answered three. I was waiting for you to delve. "When is he going to start delving?" I asked myself.
Guil: - And two repetitions.
Ros: Hardly a leading question between us.
(R&G, p. 40)

Playful Treatment of Sentence Elements and Sentence Sequence

It is part of Stoppard's craftsmanlike attitude to language that he tends to perform juggling operations with the various elements of a sentence. He can treat sentences as if they were toy constructions which can be dismantled at will, the constituent building blocks serving as elements in ever varying combinations, new elements being added and old ones replaced by new variants. This is what seems to happen in the following passage:

Player: - Tonight we play to the court. Or the night after. Or to the tavern. Or not.
Guil: Perhaps I can use my influence.
Player: At the tavern?
Guil: At the court. I would say I have some influence.
Player: Would you say so?
Guil: I have influence yet.
Player: Yet what? (R&G, p. 18)
In a version of an old music-hall joke the Player juggles with the three elements of his repertoire, blood, love and rhetoric, which enter into a maximum number of combinations, with one self-imposed restriction concerning blood for the sake of variety:

Player: - well, I can do you blood and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three concurrent or consecutive, but I can't do you love and rhetoric without the blood. - (R&G, p. 23)

Juggling of the above kind is missing in WFG. In his novels, however, Beckett has reduced the technique to its ultimate absurdity. Stoppard's juggling with adverbials, as in the passage below, also has its parallels in Beckett:

Guil (pause): No, somebody might come in.
Ros: In where?
Guil: Out here.
Ros: In out here?
Guil: On deck. (R&G, p. 72)

In Beckett's "novella" First Love the hero composes the following epitaph for himself:

Hereunder lies the above who up below
So hourly died that he lived on till now. 5

A technique that seems peculiarly Stoppard's with no parallels in Beckett is the introduction of ambiguity into sentence sequence. The method is basically related to the music-hall convention of adroitly turning one meaning into another by means of a deft addition to a sentence or a phrase. In the following passage Guil performs such a conjuring trick:

Guil: Yes, one must think of the future.
Ros: It's the normal thing.
Guil: To have one. - (R&G, p. 50)

The technique is seen at its most intricate and most playful in the following music-hall exchange:

Ros: It makes you think.
Guil: Don't think I haven't thought of it.
Ros: And with her husband's brother.
Guil: 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.
Ros: Would you go so far?
Guil: Never. (R&G, p. 36)

The three underlined lines offer three possible combinations: "She went to him too close"; "She went to him for comfort"; "She went to him too close for comfort". The last one of these combinations can again mean two different things: "She went to him too close, for comfort", or "She went to him, too close for comfort". The line "Too close" also combines with Guil's previous line: "They were close, too close". The four lines thus have a remarkably versatile function in their context; either alternating lines form sense units and at the same time viable sentences, or also the second and third or the last three lines respectively form sentences. The last line but one is a pun and invites two interpretations: 'Would you draw that drastic conclusion?' or 'Would you personally be prepared to commit the acts in question?'. Undoubtedly Stoppard's reputation for verbal showmanship is partly due to dexterity of phrase of the above kind.

Frustrated Expectations and the Technique of Deflation

A recurrent element in the complex response that WFG and R&G elicit is laughter, notwithstanding the tragic that is frequently bound up with the comic in these plays. The comic and the reaction in which an individual experience of the comic can find release, laughter, are themselves complex phenomena which have been analyzed by philosophers and scholars from Aristotle to Freud. A definition of laughter that seems to have special relevance in the case of WFG and
R&G was given by Immanuel Kant; according to him, laughter is a frustrated expectation, an expectation "dissolved into nothing". Playing upon the audience's expectations, anticipating people's routine reactions to given words, lines and situations and then upsetting them, i.e., letting the continuation of a piece of dialogue or a scene in some way or other run counter to the foregone conclusions or notions of the audience, seems to be a structural principle in both WFG and R&G.

The instances in which the audience's expectations are frustrated in R&G and WFG are of varying nature. In some cases there is an incongruity between one line and the next or between the lines of one speaker and the next. In some cases a word, a line or a piece of action elicits an unexpected or surprising comment. In some cases it is possible to speak of deflation in the sense of 'anticlimax', i.e., 'the addition of a particular which suddenly lowers the effect'.

Deflation characterizes WFG and R&G on a major scale. Both plays contain insulting remarks addressed to the audience, which deflate whatever theatrical illusion the spectators happen to expect. The music-hall trivia in R&G, which is based on Shakespearean tragedy, in itself amounts to deflation. Whatever hidden anguish the two tramps in Beckett's play might touch in the audience is quickly undercut by their clownish pranks. Here the main concern will be deflation on a minor scale, i.e., anticlimax in some longish speeches and the use of qualification and afterthought; the latter could be called the technique of "dismantlement" and is perhaps the most devastating technique of all.

Incongruity between Lines

This is a technique used in WFG. The incongruity between lines generates gruesome humour. In most
cases the incongruity is unintentional on the part of the speaker, being an appropriate reaction to one context but inappropriately connected with another context which demands an entirely different reaction. In the following passage Pozzo and the tramps are engaged in a search for Pozzo's lost watch:

Estragon: I hear something.
Pozzo: Where?
Vladimir: It's the heart.
Pozzo: (disappointed). Damnation! (WFG, p. 46)

In the following instance the incongruity is due to the fact that the two protagonists are not listening to each other but each is speaking to himself:

Estragon: We might try him with other names.
Vladimir: I'm afraid he's dying.
Estragon: It'd be amusing. (WFG, p. 83)

There are no clear instances of a similar kind in R&G.

Unexpected and Surprising Comments

One type of "ambush" that Stoppard uses to frustrate his audience's expectations is the surprise caused by some unexpected comments, which occasionally constitute a minor revelation. They are often light in tone and purpose, and Stoppard seems to be more concerned here with language games than sombre effects. Quite often in an unexpected or surprising comment the generally accepted connotations of a word or phrase are denied or questioned. Making up one's mind is a process that for most people would imply something definite, a decision arrived at on the basis of certain considerations which determine the nature of this decision. So it comes as a surprise when Guil, in answer to Ros' question "Why don't you make up your mind?" says, "We can't afford anything quite so arbitrary" (R&G, p. 28). Later on in the same scene Guil states, "we are presented with alternatives - But not choice", thereby deftly upsetting any notion
one might have entertained that the existence of alternatives automatically implies the existence of a choice. When the Player informs Ros that Hamlet's "bent" in drama is "classical", Ros's comment is just one word, "Saucy!", not exactly an epithet readily associated with the classical (R&G, p. 47). Cheating has the connotation of a fake performance replacing a genuine one; in the scene in which Guil tries to kill the Player with the fake dagger the circumstances are reversed: "For a moment you thought I'd - cheated" (R&G, p. 90), says the Player meaning that for a moment Guil mistook the Player's performance for a real death struggle.

In WFG an instance of surprising comment reflects a tone more sombre than that in R&G:

Vladimir: Let him alone. Can't you see he's thinking of the days when he was happy. (Pause). Memoria praeteritorum bonorum - that must be unpleasant. (WFG, p. 86)

In R&G a piece of action can give rise to an unexpected and surprising comment. Such a comment can at times constitute an anticlimax. On board the boat to England Hamlet makes one of his brief appearances in the following manner:

(Hamlet comes down to footlights and regards the audience. The others watch but don't speak. Hamlet clears his throat noisily and spits into the audience. A split second later he claps his hand to his eye and wipes himself. He goes back upstage). Ros: A compulsion towards philosophical introspection is his chief characteristic, if I may put it like that. (R&G, p. 84)

The inappropriateness of Ros' statement in the context deflates Hamlet's stature as a tragic hero and brings him down to the crude level of his actual behaviour. Similar inappropriate comments on a piece of action are made in R&G on several occasions. When after a long-drawn-out lull in the action of the play, during
which Ros and Guil are left to their own devices feeling low and abandoned, Claudius and Gertrude, accompanied by Polonius and Ophelia, make their brief entrance and exit, Ros bursts out peevishly, "Never a moment's peace! In and out, on and off, they're coming at us from all sides" (R&G, p. 53). The comments Ros and Guil make during the "seeking-out" of Hamlet episode are equally inappropriate. "Well, at last we are getting somewhere" (R&G, p. 64), says Guil, back in his original position after a few weak attempts to start a search. After having stood helplessly by while Hamlet dragged Polonius' body on to the stage and off again Ros says, "That was close", and is supported by Guil, "There's a limit to what two people can do" (R&G, p. 65).

Deflation in Elocutionary Speeches

Some longish, eloquent speeches are deflated in both R&G and WFG. An example in the former play is Guil's description of Hamlet's symptoms:

Guil: It really boils down to symptoms. Pregnant replies, mystic allusions, mistaken identities, arguing his father is his mother, that sort of thing; intimations of suicide, forgoing of exercise, loss of mirth, hints of claustrophobia not to say delusions of imprisonment; invocations of camels, chameleons, capons, whales, weasels, hawks, handsaws - riddles, quibbles and evasions; amnesia, paranoia, myopia; daydreaming, hallucinations; stabbing his elders, abusing his parents, insulting his lover, and appearing hatless in public - knock-kneed, droop-stockinged and sighing like a love-sick schoolboy, which at his age is coming on a bit strong. (R&G, p. 84-85).

Guil's impressive list ends in a ludicrously inadequate statement, "which at his age is coming on a bit strong". The statement is in violently comic contrast to the cumulative effect of Guil's grandiose description. In some cases a speech seems to be pointing to an unmistakable conclusion as when Guil
pursues his theme on boats:

Guil: Free to move, speak, extemporize, and yet. We have not been cut loose. Our truancy is defined by one fixed star, and our drift represents merely a slight change of angle to it: we may seize the moment, toss it around while the moments pass, a short dash here, an exploration there, but we are brought round full circle to face again the single immutable fact - that we, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, bearing a letter from one king to another, are taking Hamlet to England. (R&G, p. 73).

As the speech continues we become progressively aware that what Guil is saying about boats is an apt metaphor for life itself. At the same time there is a mounting expectation on our part as to the conclusion of the speech, the "single immutable fact" crystallizing in our minds as the fact of death. But as if metaphorically bringing us "round full circle", Guil snatches from us our foregone conclusion and continues, "- that we, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, bearing a letter from one king to another, are taking Hamlet to England", thereby firmly joining his soliloquy back to the plot of the play.

The conclusion of the above speech by Guil is parallel to the conclusion of one of Vladimir's most eloquent speeches, in which he deliberates whether he and Estragon should help Pozzo. Vladimir concludes his speech as follows:

- What we are doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come -

After Estragon's "Ah!" and Pozzo's "Help!" comes the deflation in the form of an afterthought:

Vladimir: Or for night to fall. (WFG, p. 80)

The continuation of Vladimir's assessment of the situation is likewise deflated brutally:
Vladimir: - We have kept our appointment, and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

Estragon: Billions. (WFG, p. 80)

The most sustained use of constant deflation in WFG is Pozzo's description of the twilight. Pozzo's every attempt to be lyrical is followed by a plunge into the prosaic; the speech ends in a note of bitter gloom and moody despair:

Pozzo: - What is there so extraordinary about it? Qua sky. It is pale and luminous like any sky at this hour of the day. (Pause). In these latitudes. (Pause). When the weather is fine. (Lyrical). An hour ago (he looks at his watch, prosaic) roughly (lyrical) after having poured forth ever since (he hesitates, prosaic) say ten o'clock in the morning (lyrical) tirelessly torrents of red and white light it begins to lose its effulgence, to grow pale (gesture of the two hands lapsing by stages) pale, ever a little paler, a little paler until (dramatic pause, ample gesture of the two hands flung wide apart) pppfff! finished! it comes to rest. But - (hand raised in admonition) - but behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging (vibrantly) and will burst upon us (snaps his fingers) pop! like that! (his inspiration leaves him) just when we least expect it. (Silence. Gloomily). That's how it is on this bitch of an earth. (WFG, pp. 37-38)

Qualification and Afterthought

Of the techniques of deflation the most ruthless can be the use of afterthought and qualification. Stoppard once said of Beckett (he mainly had Beckett's novels in mind),

there's a Beckett joke which is the funniest joke in the world to me. It appears in various forms but it consists of confident statement followed by immediate refutation by the same voice. It's a constant process of elaborate structure and sudden - and total - dismantlement.9

"Dismantlement" seems to be a particularly apt term for the use of qualification and afterthought. There
are at least a dozen examples in WFG of a statement deflated by gradual qualification or reduced next to nothing by an afterthought just like Pozzo's "pale and luminous" sky in the above speech on twilight was qualified by two added items of specification. When meeting Vladimir and Estragon, Pozzo expresses his doubts concerning the two in afterthoughts:

Pozzo: (halting). You are human beings none the less. (He puts on his glasses). As far as one can see. (He takes off his glasses). Of the same species as myself. (He bursts into an enormous laugh). Of the same species as Pozzo!
Made in God's image! (WFG, p. 23)
Pozzo: Yes, gentlemen, I cannot go for long without the society of my likes (he puts on his glasses and looks at the two likes) even when the likeness is an imperfect one. (WFG, p. 24)

Any confident assertion or unwavering resolution is likely to fade away with the pale cast of an afterthought:

Estragon: There's an even chance. Or nearly. (WFG, p. 18)
Vladimir: (tenderly). I'll carry you. (Pause). If necessary. (WFG, p. 32)

Perhaps the most famous of the afterthoughts in WFG is the one contained in Vladimir's answer to Estragon's insistent questions whether the two are tied to Godot:

Vladimir: To Godot? Tied to Godot? What an idea! No question of it. (Pause). For the moment. (WFG, p. 21)

One of Guil's afterthoughts in R&G is a faint echo of the above. On board the boat Guil says: "We have, for the while, secured or blundered into, our release, for the while" (R&G, p. 84). Very similar in reductive power to Beckettian afterthoughts is also the following:
Guil's statement starts as a joyful tribute to his sense of freedom on the boat. A moment's reflection gives him cause to modify his statement somewhat, and finally, more or less crest-fallen, Guil feels compelled to add yet another modification until what is left of the original statement is the mere form, an empty shell of a statement, irresistably hilarious in its inanity, "For a time one is relatively free on a boat", clearly a statement so feeble in its import as not to be worth making, except for comic purposes.

In R&G an afterthought can also be a withering comment as in the following:

Ros: They'll have us hanging about till we're dead. At least. (R&G, p. 68)

"At least" adds a grotesque dimension to Ros' statement. Instead of stirring in us thoughts of immortality, "at least", combined with the banality of "hanging about" in the previous sentence, is more likely to emphasize the morbid, physical aspects of death, or Elizabethan methods of execution. It also deflates Hamlet as a ghost story, being the modern man's way of dismissing the supernatural as a facetious joke.

Wryly humorous are the instances of mock-serious qualification in Guil's speech on the law of probability:

Guil: The equanimity of your average tosser of coins depends upon a law, or rather a tendency, or let us say a probability, or at any rate a mathematically calculable chance...

The sun came up about as often as it went down, in the long run...(R&G, p. 12)

In the first example the modification moves from
absolute certainty to the almost complete lack of it; what starts as a law fizzes out, on reflection, as a mere chance. What according to common-sense experience is completely reliable is in the second example presented with extreme caution, usually allowed only philosophers. Cautious pedantry, which characterizes much of philosophy, on the one hand and unthinking trust in what are regarded as self-evident certainties on the other are thus deflated.

The above discussion of the use of deflation was restricted to WFG and R&G. That does not mean, however, that the technique was unknown to Shakespeare. Maurice Charney quotes two passages from Hamlet in which Hamlet deflates his own speech. One of them is the third soliloquy (2.2.553-609); in the middle of his speech Hamlet expresses disgust at the way he has to "unpack" his heart "with words" (2.2.589). In the second instance Hamlet breaks off his praise of Horatio's virtues by saying abruptly, "Something too much of this -" (3.2.72). These two examples suffice to remind one again of Shakespeare's "infinite variety" in the use of techniques available to a dramatist.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1 Hayman, Tom Stoppard, p. 7.
2 Gessner, p. 51.
3 Ibid., p. 46.
4 Beckett's novel Watt (London, 1963) contains several striking examples, e.g., the following on page 209: "For one day Mr Knott would be tall, fat, pale and dark, and the next thin, small, flushed and fair, and the next sturdy, middle-sized, yellow and ginger, and the next small, fat, pale and fair," etc. The computed combinations of Mr Knott's twelve
characteristics continue for about two pages. Whatever other significance may be ascribed to these absurd tabulations, they at least show Beckett's supreme contempt for the needs of the average reader who expects a story with a plot, a beginning and an end. If WFG stands for a dry mock of the convention of drama, Beckett's novels, like Tristram Shandy, mock the convention of the novel.


7 The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

8 In WFG the insulting remarks include "that bog" (p. 15). "Inspiring prospects", spoken ironically (p. 14); when Estragon recoils in horror from the direction of the audience Vladimir remarks, "Well, I can understand that" (p. 74). In R&G the audience are told that "They should burn to death in their shoes" (p. 43) after Ros's false fire alarm, which, as Walter D. Asmus has pointed out in "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" in Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare - Gesellschaft West (1970, p. 119), is a direct acting-out of Hamlet's comment "What, frightened with false fire!" (Hamlet, 3.2.266) in the scene in which Claudius, alarmed and in consternation, leaves the performance of The Murder of Conzago.

9 Hayman, Tom Stoppard, p. 7.

10 Charney, pp. 269–71.
CHAPTER VI

PARODY IN HAMLET AND ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

Hamlet

Elizabethan revenge tragedy, a branch of the Elizabethan tragedy of blood, had its "apotheosis" in Shakespeare's Hamlet. The most illustrious early representative of the genre was The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd, with which Hamlet has many obvious parallels and which was itself modelled on Seneca's tragedies. Ashly H. Thorndike enumerates seven Elizabethan revenge tragedies which were earlier than the final version of Hamlet, the Second Quarto of 1604; among them he does not count Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, still a somewhat crude and much more Senecan revenge play, which was first printed in 1594. The question of the early history of the Hamlet plays has left the Shakespearean world divided: Are the contemporary allusions, the earliest from the year 1589, to a play written by Shakespeare, or did there exist an older Hamlet play independently of Shakespeare, possibly written by Kyd, as has been suggested, among others, by Fredson Bowers? Another controversy has concerned the exact relations between the First and the Second Quartos: the considerable differences between the two could be due either to a remodelling of the play by Shakespeare or to the nature of the transcript, perhaps a reconstruction from memory and in various ways imperfect, from which the First Quarto was printed.

The enigma of the hero in the play which has received more comment than any other tragedy extends to its antecedents:

What makes the relations of Hamlet to other contemporary plays particularly interesting is the fact that
Hamlet contains implicit references to the Elizabethan theatre. It contains a play within a play, a long passage, Aeneas' tale to Dido, from an avowedly contemporary play, Hamlet's lengthy discussion with the two courtiers and the Players concerning the theatre of his day, and his advice to the Players, which seems to reflect his, and indirectly Shakespeare's, personal preferences in theatrical matters. Elizabethan drama is an intricate maze of collaboration, borrowings and allusions to other plays; some of that intricate quality has also been imputed to Hamlet. Considering the vast number of problems that beset the study of Hamlet it is noteworthy that scholars have been interpreting, with a measure of assurance, Shakespeare's critical voice in some passages, for instance, that certain stylistic peculiarities are used with the intention of parodying other dramatists' works.

Aeneas' Tale to Dido

One of the most controversial of such, potentially parodic, passages is Aeneas' tale to Dido (2.2. 454-522). Hamlet introduces the speech with the warmest commendations (2.2. 439-53), on which Pope commented as follows: "This whole speech of Hamlet is purely ironical; he seems to commend this play to expose the bombast of it".5 A number of later editors and Shakespearean scholars joined in the controversy, some of them forcefully opposing Pope's view. Coleridge wrote: "The fancy that a burlesque was intended sinks below criticism; the lines, as epic narrative, are superb".6 The play that Aeneas' tale supposedly came from was identified as Dido, Queen of Carthage by Marlowe and Nash, or an anonymous play, Dido and Aeneas. The conclusion reached by Fleay in 1874 was that the Aeneas' tale part of the play was written by Nash after Marlowe's death. Shakespeare, who had expected the revision of the play to be committed to
him, wrote the passage in *Hamlet* in competition with Nash, and "the object which Shakespeare had in view in introducing this speech into *Hamlet* was to expose the weakness of his opponent Nash as a playwright". According to Fleay, "the superior power and excellence" of Shakespeare's version is manifest.\(^7\)

The controversy outlined above clearly shows the difficulty in recognizing parody in a work written in the relatively distant past. OED defines parody as

> A composition in prose or verse in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author or a class of authors are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects; an imitation of a work more or less closely modelled on the original, but so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect.

In the case of Aeneas' tale the difficulties are manifold: not only is it impossible for scholars to identify with absolute certainty the writer whose style Shakespeare allegedly wanted to single out for attention but also to reach agreement on whether Shakespeare's imitation was simply a superior product or whether it included ludicrous elements. The only indication in the passage of possible authorial censure is Hamlet's disapproval of the word "mobled", (2.2. 507-8). The kind of opinion voiced by Schlegel is worth considering here:

> This extract [Aeneas' tale] must not be judged of by itself, but in connection with the place where it is introduced. To distinguish it as dramatic poetry in the play itself, it was necessary that it should rise above its dignified poetry in the same proportion that the theatrical elevation does above simple nature.

Schlegel notices the same principle of dramatic expediency at work in the play within the play also: "Shakespeare has composed the play in *Hamlet* altogether in sententious rhymes full of antitheses" to keep its language apart from that of the main
It is tempting to believe that Aeneas' tale and the play within the play were written by Shakespeare to parody his predecessors or contemporaries whose language seemed to him antiquated, tumid and bombastic, but such a belief appears to be grounded on personal impressions.

**Richard III and The Spanish Tragedy**

There are two examples of literary parody in Hamlet which are less controversial than Aeneas' tale to Dido or the play within the play. One of them is Hamlet's "satirical condensation", "the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge" (3.2. 253-54), of the two following lines from *The True Tragedy of Richard III*:

> The screeking Raven sits croking for reuenge. Whole heards of beasts comes bellowing for reuenge.

The other one is Hamlet's song-poem after the play,

> For if the King like not the comedy Why then, belike - he likes it not, perdy. (3.2. 293-94)

Maurice Charney calls it "a takeoff on *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), which was one of the most parodied works of its time". The corresponding lines in Kyd's play are as follows:

> And if the world like not this tragedy, Hard is the hap of old Hieronimo. (4.1. 197-98)

Similar satirical quotations are not uncommon in Elizabethan drama.

**Hamlet Parodying Other Characters' Speech**

Besides literary parody, *Hamlet* also contains passages in which Hamlet parodies other characters' speech. Maurice Charney, who has made a close study of how
dramatic character is revealed in Hamlet through speech, distinguishes four different styles for Hamlet: 1. a self-conscious style expressed chiefly in parody; 2. a witty style associated with his madness; 3. a passionate style used primarily in the soliloquies; and 4. a simple style for narration and special effects. Hamlet's self-conscious style is commented on by Charney as follows: "Hamlet seems always to be conscious of himself as a user of words, and we often have the impression that he is trying out different styles to see what their effect on himself will be". The "most brilliant and most characteristic effects" of Hamlet's self-conscious style are seen in parody, "which, as the art of ironic imitation, shows at once a subtle mastery of style and a total abandonment of any individual style". According to Charney, Hamlet indulges in the following types of parody: he parodies Osric's ridiculously affected speech; on Ophelia's grave he parodies Laertes' ranting; in his letter to Claudius and in his forged "grand commission" he parodies Claudius; he parodies the Queen by mimicking her lines in the closet scene; and finally, he parodies colloquial speech in the Ghost scene (1.5. 176-77). There is little doubt that in the case of Osric, Claudius and Gertrude parody is in fact intended by Hamlet. Laertes' ranting is controversial, and the suggestion that Hamlet wanted to parody people's everyday conversation seems even more far-fetched.

Osric's Style

Osric's style, which Hamlet parodies by adopting it in some of his lines in his conversation with Osric (5.2. 82-182), is described by Maurice Charney as follows: "Osric consistently replaces vulgar monosyllables by nobler polysyllables, euphemizes all low and base words, subjunctivates and conditionalizes the
indicative mood and turns direct phrases into polite and meaningless circumlocutions". Osric is also fond of "new-minted, inkhorn terms", coined chiefly out of Latin. It has been pointed out that by parodying Osric Shakespeare indirectly ridiculed Euphuism; Lyly's Euphuës had appeared some time between 1579-81.

If Hamlet's exchange with Laertes in the graveyard is of the nature of parody, it is of a much subtler kind than the Osric passage. Maurice Charney calls attention especially to two speeches, in which Hamlet seems to be attempting to outdo Laertes' grandiloquence. The first speech includes "rhetorical and theatrical" terms like "emphasis", "phrase of sorrow" and "wonder-wounded hearers" and seems to be more concerned with Hamlet's "outraged sense of style" than "lamentation for his lost loved one":

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? Whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. (5.1. 248-52).

The second speech begins with some grotesque questions, in which "Hamlet proposes a series of absurd, mock-heroic love trials":

'Swounds, show me what thou'rt do.
Woo't weep? Woo't fight? Woo't fast? Woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
I'll do 't. (5.1. 268-71)

As the speech continues, "Hamlet will match Laertes hyperbole for hyperbole". He implies that Laertes and himself are "mouthing" and "ranting"; "mouthing" had been scornfully condemned by Hamlet in his advice to the Players. (3.2. 3-4)
Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou. (5.1. 271-78)

However, Charney's view that the above speeches by Hamlet are to be taken as parody is potentially controversial. Some older commentators discern "ranting" even elsewhere in the play, not only in the graveyard scene. Ashley H. Thorndike writes: "To see that he [Hamlet] is by no means altogether removed from the ranting, half-mad, stage revenger, we have only to recall the words of the soliloquy which appears for the first time in the second quarto.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day Would quake to look on." (3.2. 391-95).

If Shakespeare in Hamlet occasionally lets the characters, particularly the hero, "tear a passion to tatters" and then seem to condemn it, he is not the only Elizabethan playwright to do so. Ashley H. Thorndike quotes the following passage from Marston's Antonio's Revenge:

Would'ist have me cry, run raving up and down
For my son's loss? Would'ist have me turn rank mad
Or wring my face with mimic action;
Stamp, curse, weep, rage, and then my bosom strike?
Away, 'tis aspich action, player-like. (I.2)

Thorndike adds the following comment to the passage: "Marston seems to be ridiculing the extravagancies of passion which his own work exhibits in abundance".

That Shakespeare's Hamlet is superior to the older type of revenge play is not questioned, but that Shakespeare in the graveyard scene should parody the
ranting style of declamation common in his day is doubtful. In the light of Marston's play one almost suspects that the device of critically referring to the style employed by the playwright in the very passage was a "convention" in Elizabethan drama.

If the parody in the graveyard scene is doubtful, Maurice Charney is on firmer ground when calling attention to Hamlet ridiculing Claudius' style for formal occasions and using a mocking tone to his mother in the closet scene. Hamlet, who has just escaped Claudius' death plot, taunts the latter through the excessive politeness of his letter (4.7. 43-47), which mocks the "circumlocutions of the court style" and contains "fine strokes of ironic subservience". The phrasing in Hamlet's forged "grand commission" is "mock-legal, a series of empty formulas distilled from official documents":  

An earnest conjuration from the king,  
As England was his faithful tributary,  
As love between them like the palm might flourish,  
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear  
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,  
And many such like 'as'es' of great charge,  
That on the view and knowing of these contents,  
Without debatement further, more or less,  
He should those bearers put to sudden death,  
Not shriving-time allowed. (5.2. 38-47)

Charney points out that the use of "as" is a recognizable feature of Claudius' style; in Act IV, scene VII, for instance, Claudius uses "as" eight times. In the closet scene Hamlet ridicules his mother by mimicking her lines through parallel versions, producing an effect of "stilted, stichomythic echoing":  

Queen. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.  
Hamlet. Mother, you have my father much offended.
Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
Hamlet. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue. (3.4.9-12)

**Shakespeare's Use of Logic**

Also the various forms of logical argumentation in *Hamlet* approximate to the status of parody. To appreciate Shakespeare's plays fully it is necessary to recognize the extensive use of logic for dramatic purposes, which Shakespeare shared with his contemporaries. Sister Miriam Joseph Rauh writes:

> Although interest in the clash of ideas is perennial, it was an outstanding characteristic of Elizabethan literature. Whether the contention was that of man against man in debate or of thought against thought within a man, Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists made full use of logical argumentation to develop conflict, which lies at the very heart of drama.  

Logic was often used for serious purposes; fallacious reasoning, on the other hand, provided a frequent occasion for humour. Sister Miriam quotes Allan H. Gilbert as follows:

> The comic writer evidently counted on sufficient knowledge in his audience to furnish an immediate response to jests involving logical terms or knowledge... the fallacious syllogism allows an instructed auditor that glory of superiority that Hobbes finds in the comic; even the uninstructed hearer realizes enough of absurdity to get some share of superior feeling. Logic also offers opportunity for incongruity when the supposedly truth-bringing and dignified process with its technical verbiage is exercised on a trifle or an absurdity.  

Shakespeare's use of logic in his plays ranges from the serious to the patently absurd; in some of his plays, for instance *Twelfth Night*, *Love's Labours Lost* and *As You Like It*, the use of logic is "light and playful", and some of the characters are "adept at the quick retort, the pert reply". Occasionally
the light sophistic of fallacious reasoning is heightened to such a degree that the result is a parody of Renaissance logic.  

In *Hamlet* the two gravediggers engage in sophistry, parodying true argumentation. The first gravedigger offers the following conclusions concerning Ophelia's death:

> It must be 'se offendendo', it cannot be else. For here lies the point, if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches, it is to act, to do, and to perform - argal, she drowned herself wittingly. (5.1. 9-13)

Not only does the gravedigger's garbled version of a hypothetical syllogism not pass muster as far as its form and validity are concerned, but it also contains a flagrant misuse of the figures of division since the gravedigger's "division" consists of three synonyms, 'to act', 'to do' and 'to perform'.

Equally absurd is the gravedigger's further dissection of the Ophelia case:

> Give me leave. Here lies the water - good. Here stands the man - good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he nill he, he goes, mark you that. But if the water come to him, and drown him, he drowns not himself - argal, he that is not guilty of his own death, shortens not his own life. (5.1. 15-20)

According to Sir John Hawkins, a friend of Dr Johnson's, the argument with its mock conclusion is "in ridicule of a case of forfeiture of a lease to the crown", involving Sir James Hales who drowned himself in a fit of insanity. "The legal and logical subtleties arising in the course of the case gave a very fair opportunity of sneering at 'Crowners Quest law'". The continued discussion between the two gravediggers contains cacosisaton, a captious argument which "serves as well for the one side as for the other".
2 Clown. Will you ha' the truth an't? if this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out a Christian burial.
1 Clown. Why, there thou say'st, and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even-Christen... (5.1. 23-29)

Another fallacious argument by the first gravedigger, the joke about Adam's "arms" (5.1. 29-37), involves equivocation, the use of an ambiguous middle term, in this case the pun on the noun "arms". The following exchange between Hamlet and the gravedigger centres on the fallacy of false assumption, "the confusion of absolute and qualified statement, called secundum quid, which assumes that what is true in some respect is true absolutely or contrariwise". 32

Hamlet. What man dost thou dig it for?
1 Clown. For no man, sir.
Hamlet. What woman then?
1 Clown. For none neither.
Hamlet. Who is to be buried in't?
1 Clown. One that was a woman, sir, but rest her soul she's dead. (5.1. 126-32)

As can be seen from the above illustrations, logical argumentation, as practised by the Elizabethans, is parodied by Shakespeare in Hamlet in the cases in which he violates the accepted logical formulas, reducing a syllogism to nonsense; he could also replace the current Latin terms by garbled forms (in the first quotation the word "argal" and the legal phrase "se offendendo"). In cases in which Shakespeare resorts to flagrant sophistry, utilizing fallacious reasoning in grossly comic forms, the result can also easily be interpreted as parody of true Renaissance argumentation.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

According to Tom Stoppard, the 1964 version of R&G "was just a sort of Shakespearean pastiche". In the final version, published three years later, the
original idea had undergone a sea change:

I was not in the least interested in doing any sort of pastiche, for a start, or in doing a criticism of Hamlet — that was simply one of the by-products. The chief interest and objective was to exploit a situation which seemed to me to have enormous dramatic and comic potential — of these two guys who in Shakespeare's context don't really know what they are doing. The little they are told is mainly lies, and there's no reason to suppose that they ever find out why they are killed.  

Anthony Callen comments on the "clever" use Stoppard has made of parts of the original text as follows:

The orginality of R&G resides in the brilliant way its author has grafted on to Beckett's metaphor of the human condition Shakespeare's vision of the world as a stage. By weaving his plot so intricately into the Hamlet story he has related this metaphor to its author in a truly remarkable fashion.  

Few viewers probably find that the incorporation into R&G of seventeen passages from Hamlet results in parody. However, by combining two incompatible styles, almost four centuries apart in terms of time, Stoppard has complicated matters for his audience. When juxtaposed, the two styles in themselves act as a silent comment on each other and the entire world picture implicit in each. The possibility of one of the styles becoming a matrix for the other, the "ludicrous" element, thereby producing parody, cannot be completely ignored.

**Bratt: Stoppard's Muse Is Ironic**

David Bratt, one of whose express aims is to establish that Stoppard's works "are not the frivolous novelties or derivative pastiches which some of his critics claim", has looked at R&G from the overall point of view of irony. Irony, he argues, provides "a fundamental unity of purpose" to all Stoppard's works.
To make Bratt's argument fully intelligible it is necessary to outline the concept of irony as it has been elucidated by D.C. Muecke and adopted by Bratt. More important than the distinctions that Muecke makes on the basis of the generally accepted division into verbal - or, as Muecke suggests, Behavioral - and Situational Irony are in this context the basic features that Muecke discerns in all irony. These basic elements or formal requirements of irony are, in Bratt's paraphrase, "the multiple levels of knowledge or degrees of awareness, the opposition or contradiction between them, and the naiveté or innocent unawareness of a victim who assumes that the lower level is the whole truth". The ironic techniques that a writer makes use of "may throw one or another" of these basic elements "into especially sharp relief" even if, to qualify as ironic, they have to exhibit all three. In Stoppard's plays puns and misprisions, for instance, emphasize the multiplicity of the levels of knowledge, juxtaposition the element of opposition, whilst character deflations and parody reveal a victim's naiveté.

The Juxtaposition of Hamlet and R&G an Ironic Technique

In Bratt's scheme the juxtaposition of Shakespearean and modern passages in R&G is not parody, but an ironic technique centering upon the element of opposition. The contrast between Shakespeare's verse and the courtiers' prose, and the incongruity of the acting styles "juxtapose two very different worlds and goad the viewer to search for similarities and links between them. And in the search he discovers the ironic opposition which lies at the core of the play". The juxtaposition of Hamlet and R&G also takes the form of the courtiers' speech and actions paraphrasing or alluding to Hamlet's. Ros' speech on the subject of death (pp. 50-51) in many ways paraphrases Hamlet's
"to be or not to be" soliloquy (3.1. 56-58). On the boat Guil "transforms the prince's ironic music lesson into an example of causality".42

Guil (excitedly): - One of the sailors has pursed his lips against a woodwind, his fingers and thumb governing, shall we say, the ventages, whereupon, giving it breath, let us say, with his mouth, it, the pipe, discourses, as the saying goes, most eloquent music. A thing like that, it could change the course of events. (p. 81)

It could be pointed out, however, that to call Guil's speech straightforward parody would not be amiss; Guil borrows phrases ("govern these ventages with your fingers and thumbs", "give it breath with your mouth", "it will discourse most eloquent music") from Hamlet's "music lesson" (3.2. 360-63), mixing them with facetious elements ("shall we say", "let us say", "it, the pipe", "as the saying goes"). Ros and Guil are, Bratt argues, in many respects like Hamlet. "Like him, they are summoned by a messenger, find their situation reflected in a play, gain an insight on a ship, and die".43 They are also inclined to "question [their] situation at every turn" (R&G, p. 47) rather than act impulsively on their instructions. But Bratt also finds a number of "glaring discrepancies which undercut the courtiers' pretensions to the status of tragic heroes"; Hamlet was visited by a ghost, whilst the courtiers' forebodings were aroused by an incredible run of heads and led only to the appearance of "a comic pornographer and a rabble of prostitutes" (R&G, p. 19); to Hamlet's famous answer to Polonius, "Words, words, words" (2.2. 193) is added a modern linguistic philosopher's comment: "They're all we have to go on" (p. 30). Significant speeches, particularly the soliloquies, undergo comic changes. Hamlet's painful clarity concerning the situation at Elsinore is juxtaposed by the courtiers' ignorance and bewilderment. Finally, Hamlet and the two courtiers die in
very different ways; whilst Hamlet finds that he is
not alone and can at last act trusting in the
"divinity" which "shapes our ends" (5.2. 10) "to
uphold the moral order of which he is but the human
agent", Ros and Guil find that they are alone and
the "only cosmic force they can see is a sinister
conspiracy more concerned with making coins dis­
appear and playing a shell-and-pea game with barrels
and men than with upholding a moral order".

Bratt's in many ways excellent and perceptive
analysis has the advantage of providing a wider
perspective for the many juxtapositions and contrasts
in R&G, namely the perspective of irony. This is
especially significant as the often comic contrasts
between Hamlet and a modern absurd play could be
easily, and mistakenly, taken as simple parody.
Throughout his analysis Bratt avoids using the term
parody. This does not mean, however, that he does not
recognize that parody can be an indication of an
ironic vision, although irony can never be equated
with simple parody. According to Bratt, parody is one
of the techniques "which may convey the attitude of
an artist faced with unresolvable contradictions in
his art and life. Parodists are not necessarily
ironists, and even when they are, their ironies are
usually corrective in intent". Bratt concludes that
Stoppard, particularly in works like Lord Malquist &
Mr Moon and Travesties belongs to the same tradition
as Joyce, "whose Ulysses is built in large part upon
self-conscious use of others' styles".

Beckett Parodied

Whilst Bratt sees in the Hamlet parallels the hand of
Stoppard the Ironist, in the parallels which R&G has
with WFG he sees the hand of Stoppard the Parodist:
"Stoppard's courtiers are just enough like Beckett's
tramps to invite comparison and just different enough
to make it clear that the relationship is parodic". So R&G "does not uncritically adopt the style of WFG, but deliberately extends, overemphasizes, and finally trivializes Beckett's technique". Bratt gives a number of examples of such trivialization. Pozzo's lyrical description of the twilight (WFG, pp. 37-38) has its absurd parallel in the Player's protest at having been deserted by the courtiers in the middle of a performance (R&G, pp. 45-46). Estragon's suggestion, "That's the idea, let's ask each other questions" (WFG, p. 64), is expanded into the extensive question game in R&G (pp. 30-36). Vladimir's search for a note about Godot's arrival and Estragon's insidious suggestions that they might have mistaken the time (WFG, p. 15) are trivialized in the courtiers' search for Claudius' letter, which is simply low comedy based on an elementary misprision (R&G, pp. 76-77). Beckett's stychomythia is similarly trivialized. Bratt quotes as an example the tramps' discussion, following Pozzo's and Lucky's exit, of how the two had changed (WFG, pp. 48-49). Whereas Beckett "interrupts the comic stychomythia almost immediately with a reminder that talking is merely a way of passing the time", and then "abandons it altogether in favor of reflections on mutability and uncertainty", the parallel conversation of Stoppard's courtiers "repeats the same words, but its context shifts more quickly - and comically - and it never abandons the comic stychomythia":

Ros: Who was that?
Guil: Didn't you know him?
Ros: He didn't know me.
Guil: He doesn't see you.
Ros: I didn't see him.
Guil: We shall see. I hardly knew him, he's changed.
Ros: You could see that?
Guil: Transformed.
Ros: How do you know?
Guil: Inside and out.
Ros: I see.
Guil: He's not himself.
Ros: He's changed.
Guil: I could see that. (R&G, p. 33)

The tramps' brief quarrel about whether the sun is rising or setting (WFG, pp. 85-86) is transformed into the courtiers' confusion about similar matters, "which does not end until Ros has offered to lick Guil's toe and wave it around for him". Estragon's prayer "God have pity on me!" (WFG, p. 77) becomes "a rhyming running gag" in R&G. Finally, the tramps' frightened attempt to escape the horror in the wings (WFG, pp. 73-74) is matched by the courtiers' attempt to escape the pirates when "they promptly dive into barrels accompanied, for good measure, by six players".

That the relationship of R&G to WFG is parodic is, according to Bratt, because the two playwrights see the world differently. Bratt describes the difference as follows:

In Beckett's play, life is a "puke" to be "puked...away" (p. 62), the world is an unambiguous muckheap, and only an absurd and inexplicable hope keeps men alive. In Stoppard's play, life is better than death, the world is an ambiguous trap, and one should "be happy - if you're not even happy, what's so good about surviving?" (p. 88). For Beckett, the tramps' trivial games merely forestall their confrontation with the void that is the essence of life; for Stoppard, life is a game at its very core.

To Stoppard, all responses to the world are flawed:

Hamlet's is hopelessly anachronistic, the Player's is brutally inhumane, and the courtiers's is comically ineffectual. The first is undercut by the juxtaposition of Hamlet's world against the courtiers', the second by the Player's lack of humanity, and the third by the parody of Waiting for Godot.

Appraisal of Bratt's Analysis

It is not difficult to agree with most conclusions in
Bratt's penetrating analysis, although one may disagree on minor details. For instance, it is questionable whether the Player's protest at the courtiers' desertion is in any way parallel to Pozzo's description of the twilight. Otherwise the objections one can raise mainly concern the exacting matter of terminology. To see the relationship of R&G to Hamlet in the light of irony undoubtedly helps one to gain a deeper insight into the nature of Stoppard's play. An individual passage, like Guil's speech inspired by the sound of a recorder (R&G, p. 81) might, on the other hand, be called parodic rather than simply an instance of Stoppard's ironic vision. The juxtaposition of Hamlet and the two courtiers' absurd world is an almost perfect illustration of the element of opposition essential to irony; not only is Shakespearean blank verse contrasted with modern colloquial, often absurd, dialogue, but the entire vision of the world implicit in Hamlet, for instance, Hamlet's outmoded revenge code and the general acceptance of the supernatural, are seen from the vantage point of 20th century scepticism. The Elizabethan concept of a tragic hero is undercut by the two courtiers' pranks as mock-heroes: "If they are Hamlets, they are of a distinctly debilitated variety, one appropriate to a modern, debunking, post-Christian sensibility". To present Stoppard as an ironist in regard to Hamlet is not to deny Shakespeare's status as an ironist par excellence, even if it cannot be shown that he regarded the fundamental assumptions of his age with an ironic observer's detachment. His use of parody and the fact that his subplots may comment on and mock the main plots are already indications of the existence of multiple levels of knowledge — a sine qua non of irony — in his plays.

More open to objections is Bratt's application of the term parody to the Beckettian parallels. Bratt's
contention that "Stoppard is not a second-rate Beckett but something quite different" is convincing, but accepting that contention does not necessitate regarding the similarities R&G has with WFG as parodistic. One could also question whether "irony" is a meaningful term when applied to the relationship between the two plays - whether it is in fact possible for a writer to be "ironic" vis-à-vis another who, like Beckett, is an ironist and a parodist to such a degree that he consistently refuses to adopt one significant stance that would provide the necessary opposition to an ironist.

"We're not beginning to...to...mean something?" asks Hamm in Endgame and receives the reply, "Ah, that's a good one!" (Endgame, p. 27). Instead of describing the Beckettian parallels in terms of "irony" and "parody" it might be more relevant to see the two, in spite of a number of differences in outlook pointed out by Bratt, as representatives of a particular group within the Absurd Theatre, whose work displays "a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method, and convention", such as music-hall techniques, and "of shared philosophical and artistic premises", such as General Irony. D.C. Muecke analyses General Irony as follows:

The basis for General Irony lies in those contradictions, apparently fundamental and irresolvable, that confront men when they speculate upon such topics as the origin and purpose of the universe, the certainty of death, the eventual extinction of all life, the impenetrability of the future, the conflicts between reason, emotion, and instinct, freewill and determinism, the objective and the subjective, society and the individual, the absolute and the relative, the humane and the scientific. Most of these, it may be said, are reducible to one great incongruity, the appearance of self-valued and subjectively free but temporally finite egos in a universe that seems to be utterly alien, utterly purposeless, completely deterministic, and incomprehensibly vast. The universe appears to consist of two systems which simply do not gear together.
Both Beckett's "muckheap" and Stoppard's "fatal trap" are ultimately reducible to this modern vision of General Irony.

Rhetorical Figures Parodied

The language in Hamlet offers a wealth of material to illustrate the use of rhetorical figures as these were classified by Renaissance rhetoricians. A modern playwright is not very likely to adorn the dialogue in his plays through a conscious use of rhetorical figures; nevertheless, it is possible to find parallels in R&G for some rhetorical figures used in Hamlet. One such figure is polyptoton, i.e., "the repetition of words differing only in termination". Shakespeare's plays contain many striking instances of the figure; in Hamlet it is found in the following speech by the Queen:

Queen: Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou last said to me. (3.4. 197-99)

In R&G the figure is occasionally a prominent stylistic feature. Shortly before the courtiers' first encounter with the Tragedians Guil remarks, "...and for the last three minutes on the wind of a windless day I have heard the sound of drums and flute" (p. 12). The discussion concerning the points of the compass contains another instance of the use of the figure:

Guil: Wait a minute - we came from roughly south according to a rough map.
Ros: I see. Well, which way did we come in?
(Guil looks round vaguely). Roughly. (p. 41)

The above were instances of rhetorical figures used along orthodox lines to heighten the style with added elegance. In some cases, however, rhetorical figures in R&G seem to be parodies of the corresponding figures in Renaissance writers. Such is the case with the figure oxymoron, instances of which can be
found in Hamlet in such felicitous phrases as "de­feated joy" (1.2.10) and "a plentiful lack of wit" (2.2.200). The figure, which can be defined as a juxtaposition of incomparable terms, can be used by Stoppard along unconventional and comic lines, as is illustrated by the phrase "confounded majesty" in the following line:

Player: No, no, no! Dumbshow first, your con­founded majesty! (p. 55)

Occasionally the incompatibility of the terms is heightened to such a degree that the terms appear mutually exclusive, as in a speech by Ros:

Ros: - you can't treat royalty like people with normal perverted desires. - (p. 46)

By definition "normalcy" excludes "perversion"; the total mutual exclusion of the terms results in a mock-oxymoron, a parody of the figure as it was used by Renaissance writers. Also parodied in R&G are the figures of division, among which Tudor rhetoricians distinguished a number of sub-classes. Shakespeare employs such figures on several occasions in Hamlet. Osric's praise of Laertes (5.2. 111-14) contains an enumeration of Laertes' excellent qualities and it makes Hamlet remark, "-to divide him inventorially would dizzy th'arithmetic of memory -" (5.2. 118-19). Polonius' list of the actors' repertoire is itself a parody of such figures; drama is divided by Polonius into its subclasses as follows:

Polonius. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited. (2.2. 401-5)

Guil makes a similar use of the figure:

Guil: - The great homicidal classics? Matri, patri, fratri, sorrori, uxori and it goes without saying - (p. 23)
Prolepsis, which is "a general statement amplified by dividing it into parts", is made fun of by Stoppard on at least two occasions in R&G. A superficially unambiguous word, not requiring more detailed definition, may serve as a starting point for further dissection, as in the following passage in which Ros is observing Hamlet:

Ros: Walking.
Guil: On his hands?
Ros: No, on his feet. (p. 53)

In the passage below the Player uses antithetabole and comparison in his dissection of the Tragedians' skill at killing:

Ros: Is that all they can do - die?
Player: No, no - they kill beautifully. In fact some of them kill even better than they die. The rest die better than they kill. They're a team.
Ros: Which ones are which?
Player: There's not much in it. (p. 61)

When pressed for more details, the Player simply says, "There's not much in it", which takes the discussion back to square one and exposes the Player's amplification as humorous chatter, done for the sheer pleasure of the analysis itself.

Stoppard's Use of Logic

It is a well-known fact that Tom Stoppard takes a special interest in philosophy. Two of his plays, Jumpers and Professional Foul, have professional philosophers as characters. In Jumpers the central argument has been defined by A.J. Ayer as being between those who believe in absolute values, for which they seek a religious sanction, and those, more frequently to be found among contemporary philosophers, who are subjectivists or relativists in morals, utilitarians in politics, and atheists or at least agnostics.
On this theme George Moore, a professor of moral philosophy and one of the central characters in the play, is composing a lecture, which constitutes a considerable part of the action. The setting of Professional Foul is an international colloquium of philosophy in Prague, and the theme the ethical dilemmas professors of moral philosophy might have to face when visiting countries which have adopted totalitarian systems. In R&G there is no central philosophical argument as such; philosophical, or rather, logical forms of reasoning are used for special purposes, and what philosophical "message" of thematic proportions there is in the play grows out of the totality of the combined elements, as a symbolic statement about the human condition.

Like Shakespeare, Stoppard uses logic for purposes of parody, but within the framework of 20th century, instead of Renaissance, philosophy. Not all the uses of logic in R&G are parodic. They may also serve characterization, occasionally in a serious context. As has been pointed out by critics, for instance Anthony Callen, the pair Ros-Guil represents the familiar Beckettian pattern of two men conjoined in a peculiar love-hate relationship, one of them having "a livelier imagination and intellect than his partner" and for that reason being "more immediately prone to anguish". It is Guil, the Vladimir of R&G, who most often resorts to logic and philosophical reasoning. He gives his explicit reason for doing so at the beginning: "The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defence against the pure emotion of fear" (pp. 11-12). Throughout the play Guil retains his role as the rationalist and the magician of logical deduction. He is capable of making sharp logical distinctions which Ros, the more down-to-earth and less intellectual of the two, often misses. He corrects Ros when the latter tries to equate phrases which are not synonymous:
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. (p. 11)

Similarly he puts Ros right during the question-answer game, when Ros finds the fact that Guil is impersonating Hamlet confusing:

Guil: I'm him, you see.
(Beat).
Ros: Who am I then?
Guil: You're yourself.
Ros: And he's you?
Guil: Not a bit of it. (p. 33)

On occasion it is clear that Guil uses the exacting language of logic even when Ros is unaware of it; this happens when Guil wants to know the manner of Polonius' approach, not knowing that Hamlet is in fact dragging Polonius' dead body:

Guil: Walking?
Ros: No.
Guil: Not walking?
Ros: No.
Guil: Ah. That's an opening if ever there was one. (p. 64-65)

Guil's last line shows that he has the language patterns of sentential logic in mind whereas Ros has not; if Polonius is both "not walking" and "not not-walking", that would indeed be an unprecedented opening. The above examples are comic; occasionally the context may be serious as when the two discuss death on board the boat to England. Guil is again able to point out some subtle logical distinctions to Ros:

Ros: Do you think death could possibly be a boat?
Guil: No, no, no... Death is...not. Death isn't. You take my meaning. Death is the ultimate negative. Not-being. You can't not-be on a boat.
Ros: I've frequently not been on boats.
Guil: No, no, no - What you've been is not on boats. (p. 78)
Most often Guil's use of logic has unmistakably parodic features. One instance is Guil's lecture on the law of probability (p. 8), which is an imitation of an elaborated code which could be used, for instance, in lecturing on philosophical subjects. At the same time the "lecture" contains farcical elements which reveal the passage as a parody. The impression of parody is strengthened by Guil's "syllogisms" (pp. 11-12), the counter-argument to syllogism number three running as follows:

Guil: - If we postulate, and we just have, that within un-, sub- or supernatural forces the probability is that the law of probability will not operate as a factor, then we must accept that the probability of the first part will not operate as a factor, in which case the law of probability will operate as a factor within un-, sub- or supernatural forces. And since it obviously hasn't been doing so, we can take it that we are not held within un-, sub- or supernatural forces after all: in all probability, that is. (p. 12)

Stoppard has seized upon the stereotyped aspects, such as the considerable length of sentences, highly specialized vocabulary and the strictly logical sequences of reasoning, of one particular code and exaggerated these aspects to produce a playful parody. The ridiculous element in the passage also derives from the incongruity of the ponderous machinery of logical reasoning being applied to a trivial problem. The same kind of incongruity is present in the passage below - Guil's spectacular feat in ratiocination to track down Claudius' lost letter:

Guil: This is all getting rather undisciplined... The boat, the night, the sense of isolation and uncertainty ... all these induce the loosening of the concentration. We must not lose control. Tighten up. Now. Either you have lost the letter or you didn't have it to lose in the first place, in which case the king never gave it to you, in which case he gave it to me, in which case I would have put it into my
inside top pocket in which case (calmly producing the letter) ... it will be ... here. - (p. 77)

If Guil is the rational man, an adept in logical reasoning, Ros is by contrast a poor imitator. Only on one occasion does he come anywhere near Guil's lucidity in summing up the situation. This happens on board the boat to England.

Ros: The position as I see it, then. We, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, from our young days brought up with him, awakened by a man standing on his saddle, are summoned, and arrive, and are instructed to glean what afflicts him and draw him on to pleasures, such as a play, which unfortunately, as it turns out, is abandoned in some confusion, owing to certain nuances outside our appreciation—which, among other causes, results in, among other effects, a high, not to say, homicidal, excitement in Hamlet, whom we, in consequence, are escorting, for his own good, to England. Good. We're on top of it now. (p. 80)

Ros's "summaries" could also be taken as parodies of the Renaissance figures which first gave details, then gathered them up in recapitulation. By the time Ros delivers his second summary his self-confidence is considerably shaken, as is shown by his faltering logic:

Ros: - The position as I see it, then. That's west unless we're off course, in which case it's night; the king gave me the same as you, the king gave you the same as me; the king never gave me the letter, the king gave you the letter, we don't know what's in the letter; we take Hamlet to the English king, it depending on when we get there who he is, and we hand over the letter, which may or may not have something in it to keep us going, and if not, we are finished and at a loose end, if they have loose ends. We could have done worse. I don't think we missed any chances...Not that we're getting much help. - (p. 81)
Ultimately both Guil and Ros find the scientific approach an inadequate defence against fear. When one is faced with a real crisis, logic fails. "Don't apply logic - or justice" (p. 80), Guil says when Ros finds the fact that with Claudius' letter they are taking Hamlet to his death hard to bear. One unfailing conclusion to be drawn from life is that the end of one man is the same as that of another: "If we have a destiny, then so had he - and if this is ours, then that was his - and if there are no explanations for us, then let there be none for him -", Guil says, mistakenly thinking that he has killed the Player. As logic and rationality are parodied or otherwise juxtaposed with irrationality and confusion, the final picture that emerges from R&G is not of a universe in which chaos is firmly governed by reason, but, to quote Anthony Callen, rather of man finding himself "alive in a world in which he can see no meaning and where his death is a terrifying nonsense". Reason and logic thus appear as a tiny, often ridiculously ineffectual beam of light flickering on the brink of a vast abyss of irrationality and "not knowing".

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI


3 Bowers, p. 85.

Fallacious reasoning as such was not, of course, regarded as parody of legitimate logical argumentation by Elizabethans. Aristotle, on whose writings the Renaissance logicians based their treatises, had distinguished three divisions of logic: scientific demonstration, dialectic and sophistic...
(see Rauh, pp. 18-19). But whereas sophistry "ostenta-
tatively employs the forms of reasoning but hides
underneath them a fallacy which must be detected by
the art that teaches true reasoning" (Rauh, p. 365),
the characters in Elizabethan drama who employ fal-
lacious reasoning often make no attempt to hide the
fallacy involved; on the contrary, they often make
it so obvious that the ludicrous element is magni-
"tuated and the impression of parody is inevitable.

29 According to Rauh, Tudor theorists variously
divided the figures of speech into different
classes, some of them being figures of logic
rather than figures of rhetoric. In the present
study, however, all varieties are referred to as
'rhetorical figures' or 'figures'.

30 Variorum I, p. 276.

31 'Captious arguments' and 'cacosistaton' are
treated in Rauh, pp. 199-201.

32 Rauh, p. 195.

33 The interview, "Ambushes for the Audience", p. 6.

34 Callen, p. 29.

35 Bratt, p. 238.

36 Bratt's references are to The Compass of Irony by
D.C. Muecke. Muecke's arguments are given in a
concise form in his book Irony (Methuen, London,

37 Muecke discusses the following "types" of irony:
sarcasm, impersonal irony, self-disparaging irony,
ingénue irony, irony of self-betrayal, irony of
simple incongruity, dramatic irony and irony of
events, general irony and romantic irony. See
Muecke, Irony, chs. 2-4.

38 Bratt, p. 239.

39 Ibid., pp. 239-40.

40 Ibid., pp. 281-82.

41 Ibid., pp. 282-83.

42 Ibid., p. 282.

43 Ibid., p. 284.

44 Ibid., p. 285.

51 The five rhyming "prayers" were cut both in the Old Vic production of 1967 and the Young Vic production of 1980.

52 Bratt, p. 463.

53 Ibid., pp. 458-59.

54 Ibid., pp. 463-64.

55 Ibid., p. 282.

56 Ibid., p. 464.


58 Muecke, Irony, p. 68.

59 See Rauh, passim.

60 Rauh, p. 162.

61 Ibid., p. 116, pp. 316-17.

62 "Antimetabole is akin to logical conversion in that it repeats words in converse order". (Rauh, p. 305).


64 Callen, p. 26.

65 See Rauh, p. 117.

CHAPTER VII

TWO HAMLET MOTIVES, MADNESS AND DEATH, IN ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

The purpose of this final chapter is to illustrate how two major motives from Hamlet, madness and death, are treated in R&G, a modern absurd play. The task is potentially interesting from two points of view: first, it illuminates how Stoppard uses Shakespearean material for the purposes of absurd drama and secondly, since death and madness are essentially tragic motives (i.e., motives more often connected with tragedy than with other types of drama) their treatment in an absurd play reveals something of the nature of the tragic that can be found in absurd drama.

The Madness Motive

Hamlet

The fact that the madness motive in Hamlet is an integral part of the hero's elusive and persisting mystery is too well known to need repeating here. The vast bulk of critical comment elicited by the motive is also beyond the scope of the present study. What is required here is an awareness that Shakespeare's treatment of the madness motive in Hamlet is two-faceted, i.e., it may elicit laughter as well as tears. Among the episodes in Hamlet involving madness it is possible to discern some which are predominantly comic and again others predominantly tragic.

Among the episodes which are predominantly comic are some concerning Hamlet's "antic disposition". Hamlet announces his intention to put on an "antic disposition" in the cellarage scene after the meeting with the Ghost (1.5. 171-72). The atmosphere of horror
and almost hysteria on the part of Hamlet, who utters "wild and whirling words" (1.5. 133), is slightly relieved by Hamlet addressing the Ghost in the cellarage in such terms as "truepenny" (1.5. 150) and "old mule" (1.5. 162) and by the stage business of Hamlet and his two companions shifting ground twice. More conspicuously comic—apart from the obvious callousness of Hamlet's teasing—are Hamlet's encounters with Polonius, for instance, the "fishmonger" episode (2.2. 171-220), the episode preceding the arrival of the players (2.2. 390-425) and the last meeting between Hamlet and Polonius before the latter is killed (3.2. 375-89). Similarly light-hearted are some of Hamlet's exchanges with Claudius and Ophelia, for instance, in the play-within-the-play scene (3.2. 90-95; 3.2. 110-23; 3.2. 134-46).

In some instances, such as during his first meeting with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (2.2. 299-314), in the Queen's closet (3.4. 140-44) and in his apology to Laertes (5.2. 224-42), Hamlet discusses his disposition in a somewhat sombre neutral mood. All scenes involving Ophelia's madness are full of pathos in the traditional vein of tragedy. Equally full of pathos are Ophelia's description of her first meeting with the transformed Hamlet (2.1. 74-97) and the encounter between the two after Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy (3.1. 90-164).

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

It is natural that Hamlet's madness, one of the central issues in Hamlet, should also be of special interest to his two attendant lords, Ros and Guil. It is a topic that surfaces at intervals; it is approached from different angles, but never fully elucidated.

The first time Rosencrantz and Guildenstern broach
the subject of Hamlet's extraordinary behaviour is in the "delving" scene in which Guildenstern impersonates Hamlet. "I can't imagine" (p. 36) is all Guildenstern can offer as an answer to Rosencrantz question why "he" behaves the way he does. Soon after that follows the incorporated scene from Hamlet in which Hamlet makes his cryptic statement "I am but mad north north-west; when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw" (Hamlet, 2.2. 382-83); R&G, p. 39). This statement is in many ways pivotal to the treatment of the madness motive in R&G. One could ask why a sentence, to all appearances straight from the Mad Hatter's tea-party, should appeal so strongly to a modern playwright's imagination. Could it be that Shakespeare has here hit upon a statement that in many ways fits the twentieth-century outlook?²

If we take a closer look at the sentence, we notice that inspite of its "madness" it is entirely conventional in form. We could let A stand for "north-north-west", B for "when the wind is southerly" and C for "I know a hawk from a handsaw". In ordinary conversation A could be an adjunct of time, of degree, of various circumstances, etc., but it could not be a phrase like "north north-west", i.e., it could not be entirely arbitrary. Similarly B could be a certain type of adjunct, and C a phrase denoting various characteristics connected with sanity, but again B and C could not very well be the phrases that occur in Hamlet's sentence. By replacing A, B and C with arbitrary phrases Shakespeare has, at the same time, done something to the way we comprehend our universe. To borrow a term from logical symbolism, "mad" becomes the truth function of arbitrary variables, A, B and C, and hence is itself only an arbitrary variable. So we could say that "madness" is an arbitrary description only defined by convention. A universe of fixed Absolutes thus becomes a universe of arbitrary variables, i.e., an Absurd universe.
It is precisely this arbitrariness of man's universe that seems to bother Guil and Ros after their meeting with Hamlet. As a direct consequence of Hamlet's statement Guil starts his hopeless attempt to fix the points of the compass:

Guil (clears his throat): In the morning the sun would be easterly. I think we can assume that.
Ros: That it's morning.
Guil: If it is, and the sun is over there (his right as he faces the audience) for instance, that (front) would be northerly. On the other hand, if it is not morning and the sun is over there (his left) ... that (lamely) would still be northerly. (picking up). To put it another way, if we came from down there (front) and it is morning, the sun would be up there (his left), and if it is actually over there (his right) and it's still morning, we must have come from up there (behind him), and if that is southerly (his left) and the sun is really over there (front), then it's afternoon. However, if none of these is the case -
Ros: Why don't you go and have a look?
Guil: Pragmatism? - is that all you have to offer? You seem to have no conception of where we stand! You won't find the answer written down for you in the bowl of a compass - I can tell you that. - (p. 41-42)

Hamlet's statement thus becomes visual stage language; in the same way as there is no fixed starting point in the universe, "pragmatism" offering the only solution for determining the position of the sun at a given moment, so there is no fixed definition of "madness", common experience offering only summary criteria. This is made abundantly clear in the conversation between the Player, Guil and Ros:

Guil: He's - melancholy.
Player: Melancholy?
Ros: Mad.
Player: How is he mad?
Ros: Ah. (To Guil). How is he mad?
Guil: More morose than mad, perhaps.
Player: Melancholy.
Guil: Moody.
Ros: He has moods.
Player: Of moroseness?
Guil: Madness. And yet.
Ros: Quite.
Guil: For instance.
Ros: He talks to himself, which might be madness.
Guil: If he didn't talk sense, which he does.
Ros: Which suggests the opposite.
Player: Of what?
(Small pause)
Guil: I think I have it. A man talking sense to himself is no madder than a man talking nonsense not to himself.
Ros: Or just as mad.
Guil: Or just as mad.
Ros: And he does both.
Guil: So there you are.
Ros: Stark raving sane. (pp. 48-49)

Words are here bandied to and fro like balls in a ball-game, each speaker giving a slightly different slant to the concept 'madness', but in the final analysis 'madness' remains elusive and undefinable: As it turns out, Polonius' definition "What is't but to be nothing else but mad" (Hamlet 2.2.94) is as enlightening as any of the definitions put forward by the Player or Hamlet's attendants. From Ros's devastating quip "Stark raving sane" onwards the discussion again degenerates into music-hall banter, leaving everybody concerned just as much in the dark as before:

Player: Why?
Guil: Ah. (To Ros). Why?
Ros: Exactly.
Guil: Exactly what?
Ros: Exactly why.
Guil: Exactly why what?
Ros: What?
Guil: Why?
Ros: Why what, exactly?
Guil: Why is he mad?!
Ros: I don't know! (p. 49)

On the boat, after the spitting episode, Ros makes his final attempt to analyse Hamlet's madness; his "analysis", however, is completely inconclusive:

Ros: A compulsion towards philosophical introspection is his chief characteristic, if I may put it like that. It does not mean he is mad. It does not mean he isn't. Very often, it does not mean anything at all. Which may or may not be a kind of madness. (p. 84)
At this point Guil gives his list of Hamlet's symptoms which remains the only solid contribution to the madness discussion that any of those involved are capable of making.

Besides being a restatement about Hamlet's condition in visual terms, the "compass" scene is structurally important. From this point onwards the discussion periodically returns to the subject of the sun, dark and light and the seasons. Towards the end of the play the dominant image is that of the sun going down (pp. 79, 87). Shortly before his disappearance Ros says, "The sun's going down. Or the earth's coming up, as the fashionable theory has it" (p. 91). So finally the madness motive converges on the death motive, stated in lyrical terms by the Player: "light goes with life, and in the winter of your years the dark comes early..." (p. 90).

All in all the madness motive in R&G provides an occasion for levity and farce appropriate in an absurd play. Heart-rending episodes comparable to Ophelia's appearances when insane are lacking. However, because of the Shakespearean framework and the presentation of the fragility of man's position in the universe in concrete stage images, the audience is inevitably made aware of the presence of a more serious undercurrent in the madness motive in R&G.

The Death Motive

Hamlet

The death motive surfaces in Hamlet in some of Hamlet's best-known soliloquies, such as his first soliloquy (1.2. 129-59), his "To be or not to be" soliloquy (3.1. 56-88) and his meditations when seeing Claudius at prayer (3.3. 73-96). In the last one of
the three passages mentioned above death is seen in the particular context of the Elizabethan world picture; the same applies to the speeches on purgatory and unprepared death in the Ghost scene (1.5. 10-22; 1.5. 76-79). The treatment of the death motive with gravity equal to the tradition of tragedy culminates in Hamlet's last two utterances centred on death, "the readiness is all" (5.2. 220) and "the rest is silence" (5.2. 356). Juxtaposed with the seriousness in the passages of the above kind is the comic grotesqueness of Hamlet's manoeuvres with Polonius' body (3.4. 211-17), his exchange with Claudius when questioned about the body (4.3. 16-36) and the entire episode involving the Gravediggers' macabre banter in the graveyard scene.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

Like the madness motive, the death motive repeatedly surfaces in R&G. On a minor scale this is reflected in the use of the words 'death' and 'dead' in superficially neutral contexts, e.g., in cliché-like expressions like "I'm sick to death of it" (p. 28), "over your dead body" (p. 57), "stop this thing dead in its tracks" (p. 54) and "we are dead lucky" (p. 86). On a larger scale the three main characters, Ros, Guil and the Player, each in his own particular way, try to confront the issue of death at a cerebral level.

Ros's reflections on death occur at Elsinore, shortly after the first meeting with Hamlet. Ros's long speeches can be regarded as the counterpart of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy in Hamlet (3.1. 56-88); in R&G Hamlet is seen upstage "weighing up the pros and cons of making his quietus" (p. 53) in the scene immediately following the death discussion. However, there is a striking difference between the meditations of Hamlet, an Elizabethan,
and Stoppard's Ros, a representative of the Absurd Age. To Hamlet death, when conceived of as merely sleep, free from "the dread of something after death", is a "consummation devoutly to be wished for". Ros, who is presumably spared many of the "fardels" and "whips and scorns of time" that beset an Elizabethan and who has lost his faith in the supernatural, regards death with aversion and fear. Being the less intellectual and fastidious of the two protagonists, he brings death down to a brutally concrete level, to "lying in a box with a lid on it". His ludicrous stereotyped expressions, instead of providing comic relief, somehow seem to drive the horror of death home even more:

Ros: - Not that I'd like to sleep in a box, mind you, not without any air - you'd wake up dead, for a start and then where would you be? Apart from inside a box. That's the bit I don't like, frankly. That's why I don't think of it...
Because you'd be helpless, wouldn't you? Stuffed in a box like that, I mean you'd be in there for ever. Even taking into account the fact that you're dead, it isn't a pleasant thought. Especially if you're dead, really...ask yourself, if I asked you straight off - I'm going to stuff you in this box now, would you rather be alive or dead? Naturally, you'd prefer to be alive. Life in a box is better than no life at all. I expect. You'd have a chance at least. You could lie there thinking - well, at least I'm not dead!
- I wouldn't think about it, if I were you. You'd only get depressed. (Pause). Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, where's it going to end? (pp. 50-51)

Anthony Callen has pointed out that Ros here is like Estragon, who forces Vladimir's concern for their surroundings "down to unpleasant earth": "Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery... You and your landscape! Tell me about the worms!" (WFG, p. 61). Ros's "death" speech contains another echo from WFG: "Before we know the words for it, before we know that there are words, out we come,
bloodied ans squalling with the knowledge that for all the compasses in the world, there's only one direction, and time is its only measure" (p. 51). In WFG Pozzo says, "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (p. 89).

Now the question is: to what extent is Ros concerned with life after death, like Hamlet? Superficially, not at all, unless one wants to interpret his ludi­crous cliché-like expression "and then where would you be" as a reference to existence beyond the grave. But the passage contains other, less obvious, hints at Ros's subconscious preoccupations; the three jokes told at this juncture all have to do with religion: the first one is about Saul of Tarsus, the second about a Christian, a Moslem and a Jew, the third, which only gives the frame of the story, about a Hindu, a Buddhist and a lion-tamer. Could it be that Stoppard is here using the same method that Shakespeare himself is known to have used, namely, that a character's speech may have an entirely secular content, he may even, like Macbeth (I VII 1-25) make strong protesta­tions of his purely worldly aims, whilst the under­lying symbolism of the passage reveals the real con­cerns of his conscience, oriented in the Christian tradition? Three times during his speech Ros also tries to attract the attention or complains of the indifference of somebody or something outside the confines of the stage:

Ros: - (Banging the floor with his fists). "Hey you, what's yername! Come out of there!" - They don't care. We count for nothing. We could remain silent till we're green in the face, they wouldn't come. They're taking us for granted! Well, I won't stand for it! In future, notice will be taken. (pp. 51-52).

In the context of the play Ros is evidently referring to Claudius and his court, but in the context of the speech it seems as if he were addressing agents and forces not quite human, his flapping arms at one
point either repudiating or confirming the symbolism implicit in his words.

What could be the further thematic significance of the "Saul of Tarsus" joke, a story about a chance meeting between two early Christians in heaven? The words of the first speaker "Saul of Tarsus yet!" reveal that the newcomer to heaven was St Paul himself, formerly notorious as a persecutor of Christians and so perhaps the very man responsible for having sent the first speaker to heaven in the first place. The basic situation in the fictitious universe of the story is thus an archetypal situation in which man must have often found himself from his earliest beginnings onwards, i.e., a meeting at a later date between a former persecutor and the person persecuted by him, a wrong-doer and the one wronged, a killer and his once intended victim, and consequently a situation inherently involving a great deal of antagonism and distress. The frivolous reply "Tarsus-Schmarsus, I'm Paul already" is contrary to all our expectations and knowledge of such situations. "Tarsus-Schmarsus", a Yiddish form of contempt and derision, airily dismisses the question of guilt as of no consequence when compared to the new status acquired by the former tormentor, and so at one blow shatters our assumptions about guilt and innocence in general: in an Absurd universe the allotment of individual guilt and innocence has become meaningless; one day's victim might turn out to be the next day's executioner. Consequently the question whether Ros and Guil are the "victims" and Hamlet the "executioner" or vice versa in a real or metaphorical sense never becomes important in Stoppard's play.

Unlike Ros, whose approach is direct and instinctive, Guildenstern tries to apprehend death intellectually. He derides the cheap melodramatic death that is the
The whisper in their skulls" evokes the scene with Hamlet and the skulls in the graveyard (Hamlet, 5.1). Next, Guil tries to describe death as stage appearances, anticipating the manner in which he and Ros will finally disappear:

Guil: - It's just a man failing 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. (pp. 61-62)

On the boat Guil speaks of death as "the ultimate negative" and "not-being" (p. 78). What Guil has in mind is a form of absolute zero, impossible to put into words except as a kind of logical formula. Soon after that Ros and Guil learn that the letter they are carrying seals Hamlet's death. Once more it is Guil who tries to take a cool, detached look at all the implications; his speech at this point neatly sums up people's customary platitudes about death, usually other people's death. On this occasion it is again Ros who turns out to be the more emotional one, as he was when they witnessed Hamlet dragging Polonius' body. Even then it was Guil who had to dismiss the matter with his brusque "Death's death, isn't it?" (p. 65)

Shortly before the end Guil still tries to communicate the incommunicable. He speaks of death in terms of "silence" and "second-hand clothes", and finally of absolute negation, only describable in antithetical imagery:
Guil: - Death is not anything...death is not...It's the absence of presence, nothing more...the endless time of never coming back...a gap you can't see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound...(p. 91)

When it is Guil's turn to disappear, half-pronounced names and unfinished sentences become the symbolic representation of the phrase "here one minute and gone the next".

Finally, the Player regards death from the standpoint of his own particular art. Death is a performance that can be carried through "heroically, comically, ironically, slowly, suddenly, disgustingly, charmingly, or from a great height" (p. 60). The Player's maxim "The bad end unhappily, the good unluckily" (p. 58) ties up the death motive in R&G with the wider issue of the nature of tragedy in general.

Stoppard's treatment of the death motive in R&G has not passed without criticism. Normand Berlin writes:

Whenever Stoppard - his presence always felt although his characters do the talking - meditates on large philosophical issues, his play seems thin, shallow. His idiom is not rich enough to sustain a direct intellectual confrontation with Life and Death. - the language does not possess the elusiveness and the economy that are essential if a writer wishes to confront large issues directly.6

To meet Normand Berlin's criticism, it could be pointed out that the death motive in R&G is treated strictly within the framework of characterization and the "conventions" of the Theatre of the Absurd, i.e., farce and comedy remain part and parcel of the motive, as clowning was an essential part of Shakespeare's Elizabethan convention. Within the limitations imposed by his treatment of the two courtiers as mock-heroes in an absurd drama, Stoppard's achievement should not be undervalued.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1 The term 'motive' is used here of the two aspects, madness and death. Peter Hallberg in Litterär teori och stilistik (Göteborg, 1970, pp. 50-51) suggests that madness is one of the motives in the play whilst the entire play has been seen by some critics as a symbolic statement on the theme life versus death.

2 Hamlet's statement did not, of course, necessarily sound "mad" to the Elizabethans. As was mentioned in the chapter on Shakespeare's proverbs, the saying "I know a hawk from a handsaw" was proverbial. A.W. Verity in his edition of Hamlet (1950) states that the first part of the statement could be based "on an old medical notion as to the respective influences of the winds on insane people".

3 Callen, p. 27.

4 Reduplicatives of the type "Tarsus-Schmarsus" are used in Yiddish to negate or deride the meaning of the word to the repetition of which "shm -", schm -" is prefixed. See Leo Rosten, The Joys of Yiddish (New York, 1970), pp. 320-21.

5 Guil's speech, abounding with platitudes about death, was given on p. 95.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings in each chapter of this study can be summarized as follows:

Chapter I was an attempt to compare the dialogue in R&G with the dialogue in The Caretaker and WFG in respect of the use of clichés and stereotyped expressions. The inquiry was undertaken because of some earlier critical assessments suggesting that the dialogue in The Caretaker and WFG is cliché-ridden. The task was beset with difficulties. First, there is no definition of the concept cliché that enables one to identify clichés in a text with confidence, the inevitable conclusion being that we are dealing with an impressionistic term which covers slightly different sequences of language as it is used by different people. Second, the available dictionaries naturally reflect their authors' personal choices in the matter and cannot be regarded as either exhaustive or perhaps even up to date. Third, the work was done without the help of a group of informants to test the results. To facilitate the task the term stereotypy was adopted and defined as the use of syntactic combinations bringing into play predictability and déjà vu such as those termed clichés in various dictionaries, further set idioms and phrases and some types of sentences and collocations. Three dictionaries were chosen to help identify stereotyped expressions in the three plays under discussion, namely, A Dictionary of Clichés by Eric Partridge, A Dictionary of Catch Phrases by Eric Partridge and Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. It was found that the number of such expressions was surprisingly small in The Caretaker (there were only about ten clichés, for instance) and only slightly higher in WFG whilst R&G contained a considerably higher number of them. The conclusion that stereotypy characterizes the dialogue in R&G more than the dialogue in The Caretaker and WFG, however, seemed untenable. So it was suggested that the impression of stereotypy in a text must also be due to the prevalence of "ready-made" sentences and clauses; these were defined as expressions which occur frequently in everyday language and are completely unoriginal only involving one's memory, and further as high-frequency combinations of high-frequency variables. In the Appendix stereotyped expressions, including ready-made sentences and clauses, are counted in excerpts of equal length from the three absurd plays and also from two non-absurd plays, namely, Inadmissible Evidence by John Osborne and The Waters of Babylon by John Arden. The results show that WFG has the highest number of ready-made sentences and clauses; there is no evidence that absurd plays contain more stereotyped language than non-absurd plays.
Otherwise chapter I dealt with such stylistic features in the three plays that could explain the impression of stereotypy that the dialogue in them creates, and further whether such an impression is justified and how the three plays compare with regard to such features. It was concluded that in The Caretaker the impression of stereotypy is heightened because of the extreme repetitiveness of the dialogue and because of the built-in stereotypy of the working-class restricted code used. Idiosyncratic speech is also used to a considerable extent in The Caretaker. In WFG and R&G the music-hall passages contribute to the impression of stereotypy because they often contain a high number of ready-made or stereotyped elements. The lack of associative links, which may also heighten the impression of stereotypy, is noticeable in some passages in WFG. Aphoristic and epigrammatic speech in WFG and R&G, being of an elaborated code type, may contribute to stereotypy only in some cases.

In chapter II instances were given of changes which Stoppard introduces into stereotyped speech patterns. These changes range from slight deviations from set phrases or idioms, unusual collocations, expanded or changed proverbs and conflated idioms to "jumbled clichés". For the most part the changes are humorous or witty; however, depending on the context their effect may vary from the serious to the poetic.

In chapter III Shakespeare's treatment of one potentially stereotyped aspect of the language in Hamlet, namely proverbs, was discussed. It was seen that frequently the proverbs in Hamlet are mutations of old sayings to which Shakespeare lent the final, memorable form. Shakespeare changed proverbs to fit the dramatic context or his blank verse; some proverbs became puns; some were given in fragmented forms; one proverb in Hamlet is parodie and some passages are virtually strings of proverbs. It was possible to note that in principle, albeit on a minor scale, Stoppard's treatment of stereotyped expressions can have slight parallels with Shakespeare's usage.

In chapter IV it was noted that the main formal difference - apart from vast differences in scale, style and purpose - between punning in Hamlet and punning in R&G is that Stoppard's puns are phrasal puns often used for comic music-hall purposes. In some individual cases, for instance, punning in clusters, it was possible to draw parallels between the two plays.

In chapter V some parallels were drawn between R&G and WFG in the use of three techniques, namely, flawed communication, playful treatment of sentence elements and sentence sequence and the technique
of frustrated expectations and deflation, including the use of afterthought. As Stoppard has paid tribute to both Beckett's plays and his novels, it is possible to see the use of the above techniques on his part as a conscious adoption of Beckett's techniques.

Chapter VI discussed parody in *Hamlet* and R&G. Owing to the circumstances pertaining to the composition and early history of Shakespeare's play scholars have found it difficult to assert with absolute certainty that such passages as Aeneas' Tale to Dido are parodic. In some passages, e.g., those in which Hamlet is parodying various other characters' speech, the parodic intent is clearer. Shakespeare's use of logical argumentation also occasionally reveals parodic features. In the case of R&G the relation of the play to *Hamlet* on one hand and to *WF* on the other is problematic. It was concluded that in both cases the relation is ironic rather than parodic and in the case of *WF* perhaps only an adoption of similar techniques. It was also found that Stoppard uses both rhetorical figures and, like Shakespeare, albeit in a 20th century instead of an Elizabethan context, logic for purposes of parody.

Chapter VII illustrated how two major *Hamlet* motives, madness and death, are treated in R&G. It was concluded that the two motives, as is to be expected in an absurd play, surface in largely comic contexts, and it was pointed out that the contexts could also be comic in *Hamlet*. However, even if the motives in R&G never attain the tragic and the sublime found in *Hamlet*, a more serious, even poetic undercurrent can be detected at times.

So far as it is possible to generalize from the relation of R&G to *WF*, it could be stated that R&G is no derivative of *WF* but has an independent, peculiar character of its own. As to the question whether Stoppard is a latter-day Shakespeare only one answer is possible: there is only one Shakespeare, but the skill with which Stoppard, a twentieth-century dramatist, treats language is by no means inconsiderable.
It could be seen from chapter I that it is possible to give an account, based on available dictionaries, of a writer's use of the cliché. But as it was pointed out, such an account can by no means be regarded as either particularly revealing or reliable since dictionaries necessarily reflect their author's personal choices in the matter. One possible solution to the problem might be to list suspected cliché-type sentences in a text and submit them to screening by a number of informants. Such a group of informants has not, however, been at the disposal of the writer of the present thesis. One category of sentences that are undoubtedly potential clichés is what have been called ready-made sentences and clauses in the present study (see chapter I). Before proceeding to give examples of such ready-made sentences and clauses from the three absurd plays which are of special interest for this study and from two non-absurd plays it is necessary to take a somewhat closer look at the concept 'ready-made sentence'.

All sentences are, of course, "ready-made" in the sense that, to be intelligible, they have to conform to the necessary grammatical patterns of the language in question. But it is clear that some sentences are uttered more often than others, some in fact so frequently that one can, with confidence, expect to hear or read them every day. But the concept 'ready-made sentence' has not been confined in the present study to such more or less fossilized sentences as "How are you today?" uttered by a medical doctor in the course of his duties and almost always occurring in exactly the same form, but it also covers such expressions as "I didn't do it" and "That's what I say". To illustrate the matter we could compare the following three sentences:

1. We are waiting for the bus.
2. We are waiting for Godot.
3. We are waiting for the ineffable.

According to the practice adopted in this study the first sentence would be clearly ready-made, both its constituents and their combination occurring very frequently in the English language. The same could be said about the second provided "Godot" is a name with no unusual or exotic connotations, as it could be assumed to have been in the original French version of Beckett's play. During the play's stage history, however, the name "Godot" has acquired a measure of unusual, symbolic significance, which could make the sentence a borderline case. Finally, the last of the three sentences contains the somewhat unusual word "ineffable", which excludes it from the category of ready-made sentences. It appears from the above illustration that if the concept 'ready-made sentence'
is to be extended to cover more than the kind of fossilized sentences that always occur in exactly the same form, the whole concept is in the final analysis a matter of word frequencies or frequencies of the clause elements in a sentence. That the concept should be so widened is necessary because it is the contention of the present writer that the impression of stereotypy that a piece of dialogue or a text creates is not only due to an occasional cliché or a fossilized sentence of the type "How do you do?", but also to the prevalence of ready-made sentences in this wider sense.

To facilitate the definition of the concept 'ready-made sentence', we could describe a sentence as a combination of variables, the variables representing either the individual words or the clause elements in the sentence. A combination of variables which all occur with a higher-than-average or a very high frequency in the language in question or a particular register of that language would constitute a ready-made sentence regardless of whether the combination itself were always the same. The stereotypy of sentences like "I have no money" and "Why don't you listen to me?" (which have both been classified as ready-made sentences in the excerpts below) could then be explained on the basis of the fact that they consist of very high-frequency variables even if the combinations of these variables are not such that, to remain ready-made, they would not allow any other variables instead of the ones actually used. In other words, combinations such as "Have you any money?" and "He never listens to me" would be equally ready-made.

The above attempt to define ready-made sentences is only tentative. It has also to be admitted that the concept of ready-made sentences so defined might not ultimately prove highly useful in attempts to determine the degree of stereotypy in a given piece of text or dialogue. It is possible to envisage a text which gives a strong impression of stereotypy, and yet the number of ready-made sentences as defined above might be small in the text. Such a text might, for instance, contain a large number of sentences or clauses which would be ready-made but for one low-frequency variable introduced into each. The clause "it has been oddly asserted" from R&G might be a case in point, the version "it has been asserted" being a ready-made clause in the kind of register Guildenstern is using at the time of utterance and the adverb "oddly" constituting a low-frequency variable inserted into it. This, of course, ties up with Stoppard's technique of creating humour by introducing a new twist into a ready-made element.
In the light of what has been stated above it is clear that the classification below is only tentative because of the lack of statistical support from frequency studies. In the passages below, sentences and clauses were singled out as ready-made if they seemed to be high-frequency combinations of high-frequency variables; in other words, it was not enough that the variables themselves were such as occur very frequently in the English language, but the combinations also appeared "shop-worn". The selection was based on impressions and the classification, therefore, remains impressionistic. Nevertheless, since some observations have been made in the present study concerning ready-made sentences, it seemed necessary to provide some illustration. The excerpts below are from The Caretaker, WFG, RG, Inadmissible Evidence by John Osborne and The Waters of Babylon by John Arden, in the above order. Only the dialogue in each case has been reproduced. Each excerpt has been taken from the beginning of the respective play except that from Inadmissible Evidence, which starts after the initial dream-trial scene, as the scene contains an excessive amount of legal jargon. From the Arden excerpt the "Dolorous Song" has been left out. Each excerpt ends in a sentence that brings the total number of the words in the passage to 2000 (sound imitations like "h'm", "er", etc., have not been included in the count). Ready-made sentences and clauses have been underlined. Occasional cliches (i.e., those listed in Partridge's A Dictionary of Cliches) have also been underlined and marked with a "c" above the line. Similarly underlined are expressions from Partridge's A Dictionary of Catch Phrases, which have been marked with a "cp" above the line, and from Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, which have been marked with a "b" above the line. High-frequency utterances consisting of one word, such as "What?", have not been taken into consideration. Each clause has been counted as one unit except when clauses form one inseparable, ready-made unit, as in "that's all there is to it". It should be noted that some of the underlined stereotyped expressions—among them some from the three dictionaries used in this study—are not sentences or clauses, but rather idioms or phrases.

The Caretaker

Sit down. Thanks. Uuh... Just a minute. Sit down? Huh... I haven't had a good sit down...I haven't had a proper sit down...well, I couldn't tell you...Here you are. Ten minutes off for a tea-break in the middle of the night in that place and I couldn't find a seat, not once. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had it. And they had me working there...they had me working...
All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt. When he came at me tonight I told him. Take a seat. Yes, but what I got to do first, you see, what I got to do, I got to loosen myself up, you see C what I mean? I could have got done in down there. You want to roll yourself one of these? What? No, no, I never smoke a cigarette. I'll tell you what, though. I'll have a bit of that tobacco there for my pipe, if you like. Yes. Go on. Take some out of that. That's kind of you, mister. Just enough to fill my pipe, that's all. I had a tin, only...only a while ago. But it was knocked off. It was knocked off on the Great West Road. Where shall I put it? I'll take it. When he come at me tonight I told him. Didn't I? You heard me tell him, didn't you? I saw him have a go at you. Go at me? You wouldn't grumble. The filthy skate, an old man like me, I've had dinner with the best. Yes, I saw him have a go at you. All them toe-rags, mate, got the manners of pigs. I might have been on the road a few years but you can take CP it from me I'm clean. I keep myself up. That's why I left my wife. Fortnight after I married her, no, not so much as that, no more than a week, I took the lid off a saucepan, you know what was in it? A pile of her underclothing, unwashed. The pan for vegetables, it was. The vegetable pan. That's when I left her and I haven't seen her since. I've eaten my dinner off the best of plates. But I'm not young any more. I remember the days I was as handy as any of them. They didn't take any liberties with me. But I haven't been so well lately. I've had a few attacks. Did you see what happened with that one? I only got the end of it. Comes up to me, parks a bucket of rubbish at me tells me to take it out the back. It's not my job to take out the bucket! They got a boy there for taking out the bucket. I wasn't engaged to take out buckets. My job's cleaning the floor, clearing up the tables, doing a bit of washing-up, nothing to do with taking out buckets! Uh. Yes, well say I had! Even if I had! Even if I was supposed to take out the bucket, who was this git to come up and give me orders? We got the same standing. He's not my boss. He's nothing superior to me. What was he, a Greek? Not him, he was a Scotch. He was a Scotsman. You got an eye of him, did you? Yes. I told him what to do with his bucket. Didn't I? You heard. Look here, I said, I'm an old man, I said, where I was brought up we had some idea how to talk to old people with the proper respect, we was brought up with the right ideas, if I had a few years off me I'd...I'd break you in half. That was after the guvnor give me the bullet. Making too much commotion, he says. Commotion, me! Look here, I said to him, I got my rights. I told him that. I might have been on the road but nobody's got more rights than I have. Let's have a bit of fair play, I said. Anyway, he give me the bullet. That's
the sort of place. If you hadn't come out and stopped
that Scotch git I'd be inside the hospital now. I'd
have cracked my head on that pavement if he'd have
landed. I'll get him. One night I'll get him. When I
find myself around that direction. I wouldn't mind so
much but I left all my belongings in that place, in
the back room there. All of them, the lot there was,
you see, in this bag. Every lousy blasted bit of all
my bleeding belongings I left down there now. In the
rush of it. I bet he's having a poke around in it now
this very moment. I'll pop down sometime and pick
them up for you. Anyway, I'm obliged to you, letting
me...letting me have a bit of a rest, like...for a
few minutes. This your room? Yes. You got a good bit
of stuff here. Yes. Must be worth a few bob, this...
put it all together. There's enough of it. There's a
good bit of it, all right. You sleep here, do you?
Yes. What, in that? Yes. Yes, well, you'd be well
out of the draught there. You don't get much wind.
You'd be well out of it. It's different when you're
kipping out. Would be. Nothing but wind then. Yes,
when the wind gets up it...Yes...Mmmn...Gets very
draughty. Ah. I'm very sensitive to it. Are you? Al-
ways have been. You got any more rooms then, have
you? Where? I mean, along the landing here...up the
landing there. They're out of commission. Get away.
They need a lot of doing to. What about downstairs?
That's closed up. Needs seeing to...The floors...I
was lucky you come into that caff. I might have been
done by that Scotch git. I been left for dead more
than once. I noticed that there was someone was
living in the house next door. What? I noticed...
Yes. There's people living all along the road. Yes,
I noticed the curtains pulled down there next door
as we came along. They're neighbours. This your house
then, is it? I'm in charge. You the landlord, are you?
Yes, I noticed them heavy curtains pulled across next
doors as we came along. I noticed them heavy big cur-
tains right across the window down there. I thought
there must be someone living there. Family of Indians
live there. Blacks? I don't see much of them. Blacks,
eh? Well you've got some knick-knacks here all right,
I'll say that. I don't like a bare room. I'll tell you
what, mate, you haven't got a spare pair of shoes?
Shoes? Them bastards at the monastery let me down
again. Where? Down in Luton. Monastery down at Luton
...I got a mate at Shepherd's Bush, you see...I might
have a pair. I got this mate at Shepherd's Bush. In
the convenience. Well. He was in the convenience. Run
about the best convenience they had. Run about the
best one. Always slipped me a bit of soap, any time I
went in there. Very good soap. They have to have the
best soap. I was never without a piece of soap when-
ever I happened to be knocking about the Shepherd's
Bush area. Pair of brown. He's gone now. Went. He was
the one who put me on to this monastery. Just the
other side of Luton. He'd heard they give away shoes. You've got to have a good pair of shoes. Shoes? It's life and death to me. I had to go all the way to Luton in these. What happened when you got there, then? I used to know a bootmaker in Acton. He was a good mate to me. You know what that bastard monk said to me? How many more Blacks you got around here then? What? You got any more Blacks around here? See if these are any good. You know what that bastard monk said to me? I think those'd be a bit small. Would they? No, don't look the right size. Not bad trim. Can't wear shoes that don't fit. Nothing worse. I said to this monk, here, I said, look here, mister, he opened the door, big door, he opened it, look here, mister, I said, I come all the way down here, look, I said, I showed him these, I said, you haven't got a pair of shoes, have you, a pair of shoes. I said, enough to keep me on my way. Look at these, they're nearly out, I said, they're no good to me. I heard you got a stock of shoes here. Piss off, he said to me. Now look here, I said, I'm an old man, you can't talk to me like that, I don't care who you are. If you don't piss off, he says, I'll kick you all the way to the gate. Now look here, I said, now wait a minute, all I'm asking for is a pair of shoes, you don't want to start taking liberties with me, it's taken me three days to get here, I said to him, three days without a bite, I'm worth a bite to eat, en I? Get out round the corner to the kitchen, he says, get out round the corner, and when you've had your meal, piss off out of it. I went round to this kitchen, see? Meal they give me! A bird, I tell you, a little tiny bird, he could have ate it in under two minutes. Right, they said to me, you've had your meal, get out of it. Meal? I said, what do you think I am, a dog? Nothing better than a dog. What do you think I am, a wild animal? What about them shoes I come all the way here to get I heard you was giving away? I've a good mind to report you to your mother superior. One of them, an Irish hooligan, come at me. I cleared out. I took a short cut to Watford and picked up a pair there. Got onto the North Circular, just past Hendon, the sole come off, right where I was walking. Lucky I had my old ones wrapped up, still carrying them, otherwise I'd have been finished, man. So I've to stay with these, you see, they're gone, they're no good, all the good's gone out of them. Try these. Not a bad pair of shoes. They're strong, all right. Yes. Not a bad shape of shoe. This leather's hardy, en't? Very hardy. Some bloke tried to flog me some suede the other day. I wouldn't wear them. Can't beat leather, for wear. Suede goes off, it creases, it stains for life in five minutes. You can't beat leather. Yes. Good shoe this. Good. Don't fit though. No? No. I got a very broad foot. Mmn. These are too pointed, you see. Ah. They'd cripple me in a week. I mean these ones I got on,
they're no good but at least they are comfortable. Not much cop, but I mean they don't hurt. Thanks anyway, mister. I'll see what I can look out for you. Good luck, I can't go on like this. Can't get from one place to another. And I'll have to be moving about, you see, trying to get fixed up. Where you going to go? Oh, I got one or two things in mind. I'm waiting for the weather to break. Would...would you like to sleep here? Here? You can sleep here if you like. Here? Oh, I don't know about that. How long for? Till you...get yourself fixed up. Ay well, that...Get myself sorted out...

Waiting for Godot

Nothing to be done. I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. So there you are again. Am I? I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever. Me too. Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? Get up till I embrace you. Not now, not now. May one enquire where His Highness spent the night? In a ditch. A ditch! Where? Over there. And they didn't beat you? Beat me? Certainly they beat me. The same lot as usual? The same? I don't know. When I think of it...all these years...but for me...where would you be...? You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it. And what of it? It's too much for one man. On the other hand what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties. Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing. Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up. What are you doing? Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you? Boots must be taken off every day, I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me? Help me! It hurts? Hurts? He wants to know if it hurts! No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have. It hurts? Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts! You might button it all the same. True. Never neglect the little things of life. What do you expect, you always wait till the last moment. The last moment...Hope deferred maketh the something sick, who said that? Why don't you help me? Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time...appalled. Ap-palled. Funny. Nothing to be done. Well. Nothing. Show. There's nothing to show. Try and put it on again. I'll air it for a bit. There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet. This is getting alarming. One of the thieves was saved. It's a reasonable percen-
tage. Gogo. What? Suppose we repented. Repented what? On... We wouldn't have to go into the details. Our being born? One daren't even laugh any more. Dreadful privation. Merely smile. It's not the same thing. Nothing to be done. Gogo. What is it? Did you ever read the Bible? The Bible...I must have taken a look at it. Do you remember the Gospels? I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honey-moon. We'll swim. We'll be happy. You should have been a poet. I was. Isn't that obvious. Where was I...

"How's your foot?" Swelling visibly. Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story? No. Shall I tell it to you? No. It'll pass the time. Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One- Our what? Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other...damned. Saved from what? Hell. I'm going. And yet...how is it - this is not boring you I hope - how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there - or thereabouts - and only one speaks of a thief being saved. Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way. I find this really most extraordinarily interesting. One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him. Who? What? What's all this about? Abused who? The Saviour. Why? Because he wouldn't save them. From hell? Imbecile! From death. I thought you said hell. From death, from death. Well what if? Then the two of them must have been damned. And why not? But one of the four says that one of the two was saved. Well? They don't agree, and that's all there is to it. But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others? Who believes him? Everybody. It's the only version they know. People are bloody ignorant apes. Pah! Charming spot. Inspiring prospects. Let's go. We can't. Why not? We're waiting for Godot. Ah! You're sure it was here? What? That we were to wait. He said by the tree. Do you see any others? What is it? I don't know. A willow. Where are the leaves? It must be dead. No more weeping. Or perhaps it's not the season. Looks to me more like a bush. A shrub. A shrub. A - . What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place? He should be here. He didn't say for sure he'd come. And if he doesn't come? We'll come back tomorrow. And then the day after tomorrow. Possibly. And so on. The point is - Until he comes. You're merciless. We came here yesterday. Ah no, there you're mistaken. What did we do yesterday? What did we do yesterday? Yes. Why... Nothing is certain when you're about. In my opinion we were here. You recognize the place? I didn't say that. Well? That makes no difference. All the same...that
tree...that bog. You're sure it was this evening?
What? That we were to wait. He said Saturday. I think. You think. I must have made a note of it. But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? Or Monday? Or Friday? It's not possible! Or Thursday? What'll we do? If he came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure he won't come again today. But you say we were here yesterday. I may be mistaken. Let's stop talking for a minute, do your mind? All right. Gogo!... Gogo!... I was asleep! Why will you never let me sleep? I felt lonely. I had a dream. Don't tell me! I dreamt that - Don't tell me! This one is enough for you? It's not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you? Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that. There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part. You wouldn't go far. That would be too bad, really too bad. Wouldn't it, Didi, be really too bad? When you think of the beauty of the way. And the goodness of the wayfarers. Wouldn't it, Didi? Calm yourself. Calm...calm...The English say cawm. You know the story of the Englishman in the brothel? Yes. Tell it to me. Ah stop it! An Englishman having drunk a little more than usual goes to a brothel. The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one, or a red-haired one. Go on. Stop it! You wanted to speak to me? You had something to say to me? Didi...I've nothing to say to you. You're angry? Forgive me. Come, Didi. Give me your hand. Embrace me! Don't be stubborn! You stink of garlic! It's for the kidneys. What do we do now? Wait. Yes, but while waiting. What about hanging ourselves? Hmm. It'd give us an erection. With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that? Let's hang ourselves immediately! From a bough? I wouldn't trust it. We can always try. Go ahead. After you. No, no, you first. Why me? You're lighter than I am. Just so! I don't understand. Use your intelligence, can't you? I remain in the dark. This is how it is. The bough...the bough...Use your head, can't you? You're my only hope. Gogo light - bough not break - Gogo dead. Didi heavy - bough break - Didi alone. Whereas - I hadn't thought of that. If it hangs you it'll hang anything. But am I heavier than you? So you CP tell me. I don't know. There's an even chance. Or nearly. Well? What do we do? Don't let's do anything. It's safer. Let's wait and see what he says. Who? Godot. Good idea. Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand. On the other hand it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes. I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we'll take it © or leave it. What exactly did we ask him for? Were you not there? I can't have been listening. Oh...nothing very definite. A kind of prayer. Precisely. A vague supplication. Exactly. And what did he reply? That he'd see. That he couldn't promise anything. That he'd have to
think it over. In the quiet of his home. Consult his family. His friends. His agents. His correspondents. His books. His bank account. Before taking a decision. It's the normal thing. Is it not? I think it is. I think so too. And we? I beg your pardon? I said, And we? I don't understand. Where do we come in? Come in? Take your time. Come in? On our hands and knees. As bad as that. Your worship wishes to assert his prerogatives? We've no rights any more? You'd make me laugh, if it wasn't prohibited. We've lost our rights? We got rid of them. We're not tied? We're not - Listen! I hear nothing. Hssst! Nor I. You gave me a fright. I thought it was he. Who? Godot. Pah! The wind in the reeds. I could have sworn I heard shouts. And why would he shout? At his horse. I'm hungry. Do you want a carrot? Is that all there is? I might have some turnips. Give me a carrot. It's a turnip! Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. All that's turnips. You must have eaten the last. Wait, I have it. There, dear fellow. Give me the turnip. Make it last, that's the end of them. I asked you a question. Ah. Did you reply? How's the carrot? It's a carrot. So much the better, so much the better. What was it you wanted to know? I've forgotten. That's what annoys me. I'll never forget this carrot. Ah yes, now I remember. Well? We're not tied? I don't hear a word you're saying. I'm asking you if we're tied. Tied? Tied. How do you mean tied? Down. But to whom? By whom? To your man. To Godot. Tied to Godot? What an idea! No question of it. For the moment. His name is Godot? I think so. Fancy that. Funny, the more you eat the worse it gets. With me it's just the opposite. In other words? I get used to the muck as I go along. Is that the opposite? Question of temperament. Of character. Nothing you can do about it. No use struggling. The essential doesn't change. Nothing to be done. Like to finish it? On! Back! Let me go! Stay where you are! Be careful! He's wicked. With strangers. Is that him? Who? Er...Godot? Yes. I present myself: Pozzo. Not at all. He said Godot. Not at all. You're not Mr Godot, sir? I am Pozzo! Pozzo! Does that name mean nothing to you? I say does that name mean nothing to you? Bozzo...Bozzo...Pozzo...Pozzo...PPPOZZZO! Ah! Pozzo...let me see...Pozzo...
Game. The law of averages, if I have got this right, means that if six monkeys were thrown up in the air for long enough they would land on their tails about as often as they would land on their - Heads. Which even at first glance does not strike one as a particularly rewarding speculation, in either sense, even without the monkeys. I mean you wouldn't CP bet on it. I mean I would, but you wouldn't... Heads. Would you? Heads. Getting a bit of a bore, isn't it? A bore? Well... What about the suspense? What suspense? It must be the law of diminishing returns...I feel the spell about to be broken. Well, it was an even chance...if my calculations are correct. Eighty-five in a row-beaten the record! Don't be absurd. Easily. Is that it, then? Is that all? What? A new record? Is that as far as you are prepared to go? Well... No questions? Not even a pause? You spun them yourself. Not a flicker of doubt? Well, I won - didn't I? And if you'd lost? If they'd come down against you, eighty-five times, one after another, just like that? Eighty-five in a row? Tails? Yes! What would you think? Well... Well, I'd have a good look at your coins for a start! I'm relieved. At least we can still count on self-interest as a predictable factor... I suppose it's the last to go. Your capacity for trust made me wonder if perhaps... you, alone... Touch. We have been spinning coins together since - This is not the first time we have spun coins! Oh no - we've been spinning coins for as long as I remember. How long is that? I forget. Mind you - eighty-five times? Yes, It'll take some beating, I imagine. Is that what you imagine? Is that it? No fear? Fear? Fear! The crack that might flood your brain with light! Heads... I'm afraid - So am I. I'm afraid it isn't CP your day. I'm afraid it is. Eighty-nine. It must be indicative of something, besides the redistribution of wealth. List of possible explanations. One: I'm willing it. Inside where nothing shows, I am the essence of a man spinning double-headed coins, and betting against himself in private atonement for an unremembered past. Heads. Two: time has stopped dead, and the single experience of one coin being spun once has been repeated ninety times... On the whole, doubtful. Three: divine intervention, that is to say, a good turn from above concerning him, cf. children of Israel, or retribution from above concerning me, cf. Lot's wife. Four: a spectacular vindication of the principle that each individual coin spun individually is as likely to come down heads as tails and therefore should cause no surprise each individual time it does. I've never known anything like it! And a syllogism: One, he has never known anything like it. Two, he has never known anything to write home about. Three, it is nothing to CP write home about... Home... What's the first thing you remember? Oh, let's see... The first thing that comes into my head, you mean? No - the first thing you re-
member. Ah. No, it's no good, it's gone. It was a long time ago. You don't get my meaning. What is the thing after all the things you've forgotten? Oh I see. I've forgotten the question. Are you happy? What? Content? At ease? I suppose so. What are you going to do now? I don't know. What do you want to do? I have no desires. None. There was a messenger... that's right. We were sent for. Syllogism the second: one, probability is a factor which operates within natural forces. Two, probability is not operating as a factor. Three, we are now within un-, sub- or supernatural forces. Discuss. Not too heatedly. I'm sorry I - What's the matter with you? The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defence against the pure emotion of fear. Keep tight hold and continue while there's time. Now - counter to the previous syllogism: tricky one, follow me carefully, it may prove a comfort. If we postulate, and we just have, that within un-, sub- or supernatural forces, the probability is that the law of probability will not operate as a factor, then we must accept that the probability of the first part will not operate as a factor, in which case the law of probability will operate as a factor within un-, sub- or supernatural forces. And since it obviously hasn't been doing so, we can take it that we are not held within un-, sub- or supernatural forces after all; in all probability, that is. Which is a great relief to me personally. Which is all very well, except that - We have been spinning coins together 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. I hope that doesn't sound surprising because it's very unsurprisingness is something I am trying to keep hold of. The equanimity of your average tosser of coins depends upon a law, or rather a tendency, or let us say a probability, or at any rate a mathematically calculable chance, which ensures that he will not upset himself by losing too much nor upset his opponent by winning too often. This made for a kind of harmony and a kind of confidence. It related the fortuitous and the ordained into a reassuring union which we recognized as nature. The sun came up about as often as it went down, in the long run, and a coin showed heads about as often as it showed tails. Then a messenger arrived. We had been sent for. Nothing else happened. Ninety-two coins spun consecutively have come down heads ninety-two consecutive times... and for the last three minutes on the wind of a windless day I have heard the sound of drums and flute... Another curious scientific phenomenon is the fact that the fingernails grow after death, as does the beard. What? Beard! But you're not dead. I didn't say they started to grow after death! The fingernails also grow before birth, though not the beard. What? Beard! What's the matter with you? The toenails, on
the other hand never grow at all. The toenails on the other hand never grow at all? Do they? It's a funny thing - I cut my fingernails all the time, and every time I think to cut them, they need cutting. Now, for instance. And yet, I never, to the best of my knowledge, cut my toenails. They ought to be curled under my feet by now, but it doesn't happen. I never think about them. Perhaps I cut them absent-mindedly, when I'm thinking of something else. Do you remember the first thing that happened today? I woke up, I suppose. Oh - I've got it now - that man, a foreigner, he woke us up - A messenger. That's it - pale sky before dawn, a man standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters - shouts - What's all the row about?! Clear off! - But then he called our names. You remember that - this man woke us up. Yes. We were sent for. Yes. That's why we're here. Travelling. Yes. 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!! Too late for what? How do I know? We haven't got there yet. Then what are we doing here, I ask myself. You might well ask. We better get on. You might well think. We better go on. Right! On where? Forward. Ah. Which way do we - Which way did we -? Practically starting b from scratch... An awakening, a man standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters, our names shouted in a certain dawn, a message, a summons... A new record for heads and tails. We have not been...picked out... simply to be abandoned...set loose to find our own way...We are entitled to some direction...I would have thought. I say --! I say - Yes? I can hear - I thought I heard - music. Yes? Like a band. It sounded like - a band. Drums. Yes. It couldn't have been real. "The colours red, blue and green are real. The colour yellow is a mystical experience shared by everybody" - demolish. It must have been thunder. Like drums... A man breaking his journey between one place and another at a third place of no name, character, population or significance, sees a unicorn cross his path and disappear. That in itself is startling, but there are precedents for mystical encounters of various kinds, or to be less extreme, a choice of persuasions to put it down to fancy; until - "My God", says a second man, "I must be dreaming, I thought I saw a unicorn". At which point, a dimension is added that makes the experience as alarming as it will ever be. A third witness, you understand, adds no further dimension but only spreads it thinner, and a fourth thinner still, and the more witnesses there are the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name we give to the common experience... "Look, look!"
recites the crowd. "A horse with an arrow in its forehead! It must have been mistaken for a deer". I knew all along it was a band. He knew all along it was a band. Here they come! I'm sorry it wasn't a unicorn. It would have been nice to have unicorns. Halt! An audience! Don't move! Perfect! A lucky thing we came along. For us? Let us hope so. But to meet two gentlemen on the road - we would not hope to meet then off it. No? Well met, in fact, and just in time. Why's that? Why, we grow rusty and you catch us at the very point of decadence - by this time tomorrow we might have forgotten everything we ever knew. That's a thought, isn't it? We'd be back where we started - improvising. Tumblers, are you? We can give you a tumble if that's your taste, and times being what they are... Otherwise, for a jingle of coin we can do you a selection of gory romances, full of fine cadence and corpses, pirated from the Italian; and it doesn't take much to make a jingle - even a single coin has music in it. Tragedians at your command. My name is Guildenstern, and this is Rosencrantz. I'm sorry - his name's Guildenstern, and I'm Rosencrantz. A pleasure. We've played to bigger, of course, but quality counts for something. I recognized you at once - And who are we? - as fellow artists. I thought we were gentlemen. For some of us it is performance, for others, patronage. They are two sides of the same coin, or, let us say, being as there are so many of us, the same side of two coins. Don't clap too loudly - it's a very old world. What is your line? Tragedy, sir. Deaths and disclosures, universal and particular, denouements both unexpected and inexorable, transvestite melodrama on all levels including the suggestive. We transport you into a world of intrigue and illusion.. clowns, if you like, murderers - we can do you ghosts...

Inadmissible Evidence

Parky this morning. Yes. What's the matter then? Late night? No, not specially. How's that girl of yours? O.K. Still getting married? Suppose so. Got to get these finals out of the way first. Hardly see her except on Sundays. There's yours. Thank you, Shirley. And how are you today? Looking forward to Friday night, thank you. Is mine there? Why don't you try looking for it? What's up with her? Dunno. Packing it in, she says. What, again? I think she means it this time. Morning all! Better start getting it sorted out myself then. Sorry I'm late. You're the boss. I couldn't get a taxi. That's the first time I've never got one. All got their bloody lights on and going home. I don't know what they're doing. Cut yourself? Yes. I don't know why - Why I don't use an electric razor. There's quite enough almighty
racket going on in the world without tuning it into my chin the minute I wake up. But it's so simple. Not for me it isn't. Two bathrooms in my house and my wife has to use mine while I'm having a quiet little shave to myself. She has to talk. Not your morning. Can't be worse than the evening. What, have a skinful, did you? More than that, one way and another. Hullo, sexy. Is that all? Don't worry - there's enough here. What - no make-up this morning? You do remember Mrs. Garnsey's coming at 9.30? Of course, I forgot you girls don't really wear make-up nowadays, do you? All leaking eyeshadow and red noses. Go and put on some lipstick, dear. What's the matter? Isn't he giving it to you? Finished? Don't tell me you're getting too much. I don't believe it. Oh, knock it off. Well, something's made you bad tempered this morning, and I don't believe that languid pipe cleaner of an accountant you're engaged to has got that much lead in CP his pencil. Do you ever think of anything else? Not so much. Probably less than you do though. Me? I just talk about it at great boring length mostly to boring, bad tempered, and silly girls. Without make-up. You know what you can do! And quick. Do you hear that, Wally? Do you think I should let her talk to me like that? I think she'd better get back to her work. I'll see you in a minute. Shirley. And put some lipstick on! Thought she was going to let you have it there for a minute. What's the matter with her? Jones here says she's giving in her notice. But she does that every other month. I think she means it this time. Oh, why? Oh - Just says she's fed up with the place. And? Oh, well just that really. What else? Well, out with it. Well, this is just what she said to me - He'd make a great witness wouldn't he? I wouldn't like to see you in the box up against someone like old Winters. She just said last night while we were locking up that she was sick of the sight of Mr. Maitland and couldn't even bear to be in the same room with him. She said what! It's all right, you needn't repeat it. Well, you asked me what she said. You know what these girls are. They get a bit, you know. And Shirley's an independent sort of a - What a funny thing to say. Do you think she meant it? Dunno. Wasn't listening properly. I'll talk to her later. When she's calmed down a bit. Remind me. What are you smirking about? Oh? Keep it outside of the office and all that? Look, I haven't touched that girl for months, not for about six or seven months at least. I've done no harm to her. If she's unhappy it's not my fault. Besides, she's engaged. That wouldn't stop you. No, it wouldn't but I didn't. It's probably that droopy young book-keeper making her miserable. Giving her dinner-dances on the Kingston By-Pass. The morning she came back from that she had red eyes for a week. He seemed a nice, quiet, serious... fellow, I thought. Nice, quiet, serious fellow, I thought. That just about sounds like every supine, cautious, young
husband all about six degrees under proper consciousness in the land. The whole bloody island's blocked with those flatulent, purblind, mating weasels. You know who they are? Her fiancé? They're the ones who go out on Bank Holidays in the car! And have mascots in the rear window. Well, it's their lives. Yes, and if we only had enough Bank Holidays they'd kill each other on every coast road from Blackpool to Brighton. You're not suggesting they should all be killed off just because they don't please you? I'm just suggesting we might hope they'll do it themselves for us. You'll be getting one of your headaches in a minute. Don't worry. I have. Do you know who they are? No. Only don't forget Mrs. Garnsey. Damn. Mrs. Garnsey. She's probably one too. They: are the people who go up every year like it was holy communion to have a look at the Christmas decorations in Regent Street. They're the ones who drive the family fifty miles into the countryside and then park their cars beside the main road with a few dozen others, get out their thermos flasks, camp stools and primuses and do you know what they do? They sit and watch the long distance lorry drivers rattling past, and old people's coaches and all the other idiots like themselves about to do the same thing. Sometimes I'd like to see you and old Winters have a go at each other - in court. I think you'd enjoy that. Don't think I couldn't, either. He's not all that good. Just because he wears a wig and I don't. Well, then - This place'd be a lot different if you were running it, wouldn't it, Wally? Everyone has their own methods. You've got yours. Yes, but mine just aren't different. They're not respectable for a solicitor. But then I don't feel like you do about the Law. I don't think the law is respectable at all. It's there to be exploited. Just as it exploits us. You'll be putting young Jones here off the job. I don't think there's much danger of that. Well, we all have our different methods, as I say. Different ways of looking at things. Wally, do me a favour, will you? You'll be saying 'with all due respect', or 'be that as it may' in a minute. I'd thought I'd broken you of that stinking habit. No, I don't think young Jones here is the type to end up goosing telephonists and knocking off secretaries, to say nothing of cooking up evidence on occasion or risking collusive agreements. Do you have it off with that girl of yours? I'm sorry. That's an impertinent question. Isn't it? Forget it. Well - No, don't bother. But I was right about what I said? Yes. Yes, I think so. Why? I just don't think it - What? Any of those things are really worth the candle. No you're quite right. It's not. Well, now we've disposed of the candle, you'd better take it with you into Shirley. She's probably in need of it. Have you got plenty to do? Got to keep you busy. Busy, busy, busy. That's what you want isn't it? That's
why you came to me isn't it, for no other reason. See what's in, what business there is, any money in, any problems, anything else. Right? Yes, Mr. Maitland. What's the matter then? What do you mean what's the matter then? Shirley? You seem to have it in a bit for him. He's a tent peg. Made in England. To be knocked into the ground. Yes? What? Oh, get me a glass of water, Shirley. Helpless? I think you're wrong there. He's got quite a good brain. Bit slow for your taste, but you shouldn't underestimate him. I don't. He's got all the makings of a good, happy, democratic underdog like that bitch's boyfriend who won't even get me a glass of water when I ask her. He irritates me. He doesn't like me any more than I like him. Why does he work for me? Why don't you sack him? What for? He does his work well enough. Doesn't he? Fine. Well then. Joy! He even laughs at my rotten jokes. Or anyway, his little filleted spine rattles about a bit. Otherwise - no sound... Joy, get me a glass of water, will you? O.K. And ask Shirley - no, you'd better get it. See if you can bring in Mrs. Garnsey's file. One thing I'll say for you, Wally, you've never pretended to laugh. Not even at my good ones. We don't all have your sense of humour. Well, don't sound so pleased about it. Anyway, I haven't got a sense of humour. I haven't had a good laugh for years. Not only that, Mr. Jones may find his finals and working for me won't do him a damn bit of good in the long run. Or you, for that matter. What's that? I say: soon we'll all be out of a job. If anyone's riddled with the idea that being busy is the same thing as being alive it's our young Jones. What are you talking about? Jones. You're sure you're all right? Sure, fine. Now what about Mrs. Garnsey, why are you shoving her on to me? No. I don't, I don't think I do. Things seem a bit odd. I still can't understand why I couldn't get a taxi. They all had their lights on: for hire. Well, you know what they are. Yes, but I've never known it to happen to me before. Not in the morning. You look all right. But if you'd like to... And the caretaker turned his back on me. I was walking up the stairs and I was going to ask him - you know, quite politely - why the lift wasn't working. And he turned his back on me. Didn't notice you. I expect. No, he looked straight at me. And turned his back on me. Well, he's a contrary old devil. Not with me, he hasn't been. I gave him a quid at Christmas, and he didn't even give me a thank you. I gave him five. Well, I know it's too much, but we had a drink together over at the 'Feathers'. Too much is right. Bill: They won't need us much longer. They'll need no more lawyers. Have you seen the papers this morning? Some mathematical clerk will feed all our petitions and depositions and statements and evidence into some clattering brute of a computer and the answer will come out guilty or not guilty in as much
time as it takes to say it. There'll be no more laws' delays, just the insolence of somebody's office. They'll need no more lawyers. I don't understand who will be needed. I shouldn't think it'll quite come to that. How do you know what we'll come to? Or when? Sometimes I wish I were older so I had less chance of finding out. Look at this dozy bastard: Britain's position in the world. Screw that. What about my position? Vote wheedling catchfart, just waiting to get us into his bag and turn us out into a lot of little technological dogs turning his wheel spit of endless bloody consumption and production. Why doesn't he stick his scientific rod - into the Red Sea or where he likes and take everyone he likes with him - including Jones. The sooner the sea closes up behind them the better. With Jones entering the Promised Land in his mini. Oh, leave the boy alone. What's he done to you? Anyway, he's got a motor bike. Even better. I can't think of a better way to emerge - in an emergent country.

The Waters of Babylon

Half past seven of a morning. What kind of day is it? Cold, I think, yes, cold, rainy, foggy, perhaps by dinner-time it will snow. No? Perhaps not snow, it is after all spring. March, April, May, even in London. I do not think - even in North London, perhaps, not snow. Breakfast, what sort of breakfast, this coffee it is not very fresh, is it? After the nature of an archaeological deposit, more water more coffee into the pot every morning, but at the bottom it has been three six weeks, seven, it's like drinking bitumen. Why don't I wash my cups and plates more often than only once a week? 'Cause I am a man of filthy habits in my house, is why. That's the electric train, it goes past. Metropolitan railway upon its embankment. To give the sun a headache before he even gets over the rooftops. In London, always the sun has a hangover, I think, every damned morning. And that? Oh that's the Irishman upstairs. That's Mr. Conor Cassidy, that's another foreign man lives in this London. He does not like getting up in the cold mornings, neither, Cassidy. Cassidy. Will you stop, please, your hangings and crashings over my head. Over my breakfast. What is the matter with this salami? I think, somebody, they've dropped it on the floor. It would disgust a drain-layer. But not me. For me, breakfast is to be enjoyed. Mr Krank. Get out. I'm feeling so tired, Mr Krank. Well so am I tired. I've told you before, between half past seven and eight o'clock of the morning I am neither elegant nor delightful. Not to look at, Mr Krank, no sir, indeed you're not. Nor to talk to, nor to make love nor nothing else. I have slept alone tonight, I am an Englishman this
morning, Bathsheba, I have bad temper like a grindstone, and where is my Daily Mirror, you haven't even brought it? I left it upstairs, I guess. In Cassidy's room, no? I was never in the room of that boy. No? Never. I don't think I believe you. Even if you tell me the truth, so what? You were sleeping with someone, weren't you? Well, if that's not what you want me to do... But not with people I know, not people who live here in my house. You must not confound a proper commercial business with... with all sorts of other things, with my friends, with your friends, with all my other businesses O.K? Now where's my Daily Mirror? I want to read it before I go out. I don't want you to read it. I want to hear you sing. In the mornings I don't sing. Yes, you do. Get out. There's the money. What money? My last nights money. What you sent me out to earn. Is this all of it there is? I'll give you the rest when you sing me your song. What song? The song, you once called it your Dolorous Song. Oh. In the mornings I do not sing. O.K. The true story, this song, of the life of, of the life of me, of Krank. This was myself, you see, at an altogether different time of the world. I make the song so that I can sometimes remember. Remember? Remember what perhaps by now I ought to have forgotten. After all, more than ten years...I will sing. I don't understand all that song, what it's about? All the names of them foreign places you been? Man, you must have travelled wide. Get out. I will not. Why, hello, Bathsheba, and you irrigating the morning wilderness of London with your tropical two eyes. Cassidy, you madden me with your noise. For your room this week, the rent is outstanding. And I'd come to pay it, so. Here y'are, fifteen silver shillings, count it yourself, all genuine and resonant like icicles. Ting, ting, jingle, jingle. You had a woman with you last night. I'm not deaf. Is five shillings extra. There was nobody with me at all. There's all the second floors. Number six the Attic's after barring up and fastening his door. I couldn't be in at him without bursting the lock? What'll you do about that? Look, I let you pay reduced rent so you help me run these lodgings. I leave it to you what to do: O.K.? Five shillings extra for last night, I'm not deaf. Mr Krank, there's all the money I owe you, Mr Krank, I always pay all the money I owe anybody, always. H'm. Mr Krank, will you give me some breakfast? There's some coffee in that pot. And finish my sandwich. Tonight, Bathsheba, you can have a vacation. Tonight you sleep with me. There's too many very untrustworthy people around here. When you're not on the streets you come in with me. O.K., Mister Cassidy? Well then, won't that cancel out me extra five shillings? Let alone allegations of... You'd best go to work, you'll be late. I don't want to be there before you. Plenty of time, now. I've a piece of information for you, Mr Krank. Oh. At the Brompton
Oratory, after Mass, last Sunday morning... I wasn't there, last Sunday. Sure I know you weren't, but this young fellow was. He seemed to be expecting you. What young fellow? One of your own lot. Some sort of foreigner. He knew me, I don't know how: he says, 'Where's Mr Krank?!, he says. Well? So I says to him, 'I don't know.' So he says, 'Tell him I'll see him soon,' he says. He gave me his name. After the Holy Apostle... I can guess it. Paul was his name. Why, sure it was, too, Then I've told you no news at all. I'll be off to my work. Oh, there's a fellow in the passage asking for you now. It's not the same one. Will I send him away? I don't want to see him... Send him down here. I will. Oh, this boy at the Oratory, I didn't like his face at all. It was a face in a cold broken mirror, all kinds of bits that didn't fit, all full of bad luck. Not like Bathsheba, now: sure you could look at her face until... Out. You can come down, Mister, he'll see you. Watch the steps in the dark, they're fitted with the most perilous declivities. Here he is, and here I'm away. Begod, I love you, Bathsheba. Er. Are you Mr Krank? Sometimes. Good morning, Er. Good morning, Miss. My name's Butterthwaite. You wrote me a letter. Indeed? I write a great many letters to a great many people. What did I write to you? Er... well...I...er... Read me what I wrote to you. Well, you just wrote like...er. 'Come next week and see me, and have some breakfast. Together we will talk business'. That's all. I was right puzzled I can tell you...I don't reckon you recollect it was in the bar at the 'Coach and Horses', you asked the barman to pass me this note, I mea... I made a mistake about the breakfast. I never eat breakfast, so I haven't any to offer you: I am sorry. You come back here tonight, Bathsheba. Now look Mr er... Butterthwaite, I've been delayed this morning, I am very late for my business. So we waste no time, O.K.? First, I'd better explain why I asked you to call and see me. I have been informed that you are in some sort of authority upon the complications, the intrigues, the tricks, traps, and tramlines of your English bureaucracy. Ah. Is it true? Well now, if you'd asked me that about twelve years ago, I'd have answered you downright, Mr Krank. Aye it's true. But now it is not. Oh no, I wouldn't say that. Not right final, like that. But since I was last in practice, there's been a lot like of changes, you know. I'm bound to be a bit rusty. In practice. What is your profession? I was a Napoleon. I beg your pardon? A Napoleon of Local Government, I was. The term is not exactly mine, but it was coined in the provincial press. But it meant me, Mr Krank...me, Charles Butterthwaite. 'Vote for your Uncle Charlie and get pudding to all your dinners'. And they did. And they got it. Though I say it myself. You fasci-
nate me. Aye. I'll tell you the tale. As a young lad I began in Trades Union Offices. Railways, smoke, black steel, canals, black stone. That were my town, and where sets the power? Mill owners: I saw that.

Hundredweights of them. Murky money. But not for me, not for our Charlie. Conjure up the adverse power from out the crowded smoke: Union Headquarters. Only a young lad: I begin: I go on: From Union on to Council, Councillor to Alderman, Alderman to Mayor, unfolded power of scarlet broadening back and belly: but that weren't the secret: it's not gold chain nor scarlet carries right power. Committees. Chairman of this one, Secretary of that one, Housing Development, Chamber of Trade, Municipal Transport, Hospitals, Welfare Amenities. Eat your Christmas Dinners in the Lunatic Asylum, Colliery Canteens, in the poor old Borough Orphanage, Weekly photo in the paper in a paper hat and all Cheery Charlie Butterthwaite, there was puddings to them dinners. Indeed, indeed. But not any more. I've forgot the taste of puddings. What happened to you? I had my misfortunes, like. So do we all. Ah yes, indeed. What have I been once and look at me now. Yes. I need someone to advise me, Mr Butterthwaite: over these difficulties I am running in, with - what you call - the Local Authorities. English process, and so on, it is still somehow strange... Ah well, of course, you being as you might say, a foreigner it would no doubt... You'd be a kind of Czechoslav, I take it. I would not. I am not a Czechoslav, nor yet am I Lithuanian, nor yet Byelo-Russian. I am a Pole. O.K. Eh, no offence, you know. Will you work for me, Mr Butterthwaite? Nay, I don't know. Where's the advantage? Advantage? Well, what do I get out of it? A fair proportion, certainly, of whatever I can get out of it. It's difficult, you know. I'm like a foreigner myself in this city, and I'm that long out of touch. Exactly what is it you want me to do? I'll explain. But look, now I must go to my business, I take a bus to the Baker Street Underground Station, if you come with me we can talk as we go. I'm sorry about the breakfast, come on. Well, that's all very well, you know, but I mean to say, I mean... Do I understand you, Mr Butterthwaite, that you're asking me for money? I have no money. How can I give you money? When you have assisted me as I require, then we shall both have money. There is such a thing as a retainer, you know, like, a little on deposit... Oh, take ten shillings. Now I shall have to go without my lunch, very likely. But exactly what is it you want me to do for you? My house, you've seen it. A well-conducted lodging-house. I have eighty people in it... In that house - eighty people... Certainly. The most of them West Indians, East Indians, Cypriots, so forth, so on. Thirty shillings a week, one room one bed, I provide packing-cases if they wish to make any additional furniture: one lavatory: one gas-ring
every landing: and a tap for cold water. Well, I don't know: I say, I'm not surprised you're in bad favour with the Council. I have had to indulge in certain, ah, subterfuges. Eighty people, they say, is too many for the one building.

The prevalence of stereotyped expressions in the above passages is shown in the following table:

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It is best to refrain from drawing too definite conclusions from the above findings, since the bulk of the material is slight and there is no firm theoretical and statistical basis for the method used in classifying the sentences. The findings, such as they are, indicate that there is a relatively high incidence of ready-made sentences in WFG, which lends some support to Niklaus Gessner's contention that the play consists largely of cliché-like components. There is no evidence at all that absurd plays would contain more stereotyped sequences of language than plays in general. That is perhaps not surprising, since all plays, to a greater or lesser extent, consist of common-core language and reproduce what we call everyday speech. That some absurd plays create a strong impression of stereotypy must be due to other factors, such as the use of music-hall passages, excessive repetition or some other devices, which it has been in part the purpose of the present study to point out.
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