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Edward Bond, Tom Stoppard, and Shakespeare: The anxiety of influence

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EDWARD BOND, TOM STOPPARD, AND SHAKESPEARE:

THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

by

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Abstract

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

In the new textual encounter, Lear, Bond's attempt to be the dominant interpreter is quite evident. The basic difference between Shakespeare's and Bond's version consists of Bond's concern not only for the personal tragedy of the characters, but for the tragedy of a society that revels in moralized and institutionalized patterns of aggression. Bond's urge to reinforce his antithetical statement compels him to change drastically the pattern of

relationships in Shakespeare's play. Bond's antithetical statement is underscored by the one-sided-structure, the development of scenes, and the use of powerful theatrical imagery.

Despite the apparent derivativeness recognized in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Stoppard could establish his own individual presnce in the new textual encounter. According to the theoretical perspective of this study, Stoppard's version may be judged to be less original than that of Bond because Stoppard's play lacks a distinctive antithetical atatement. Nevertheless, through bringing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players to the foreground of his play, and by developing thoroughly his sophisticated use of mirror technique (the play within the play and mimetic scenes), Stoppard could bring about a brilliant inversion of Shakespeare's material. Like Bond, Stoppard uses theatrical imagery which is basic to the concerns, forms, and the dramatic structure of his play.

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INTRODUCTION

Dramatic criticism has not yet closely examined Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence. While Bloom has applied his theory only to Romantic poets and lyric form, neither he nor any other critic has tried to demonstrate how far the theory could operate when applied to dramatists. Although " it was in the name of drama that the Romantics assailed neoclassicism,"[1] Bloom, by his own admission, excludes not only Shakespeare but all dramatists before or after him, Romantics or otherwise.

Nevertheless, this research takes for granted Bloom's claim that his theory is a theory of poetry which, by necessity,

would mean that it is applicable to all writers in all literary genres. We shall attempt to see how far his theory of the anxiety of influence can be applied to the dramatists Edward Bond, Tom Stoppard, and William Shakespeare.

No major attempt has been made so far to define concretely, from a theoretical perspective, the relationship between Bond and Stoppard's versions Lear and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead and Shakespeare's King Lear and Hamlet. Studies dealing with this relationship tend to emphasize similarities and differences but never try to offer a theory of influence based on concrete analyses of the four plays. Critics acknowledge that Bond's play is dependent on Shakespeare's play but in a wholly creative sense, and that Stoppard's play, though " recognizably derivative,"[2] is genuinely different. Yet, no critic has tried to provide a theoretical perspective by which we can define the relationship between the modern versions and the Shakespearean originals.

Studies of Bond's Lear and Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead are exclusively concerned either with

the contemporary influence on them or with how the Shakespearean model functions as a " point of departure,"[3] but seldom with the intra-dramatic relationship. In her article " Edward Bond's Lear," Leslie Smith, for instance, deals with " Brecht's social and political purposiveness allied to Strindberg's tormented vision of man's self-destructiveness," which constitute Bond's " double vision."[4] " Bond," she states, " has a great playwright's ability to express this double vision in dramatic images, in dialogue and action that have extraordinary force and power."[5] When she comes to the Shakespearean influence, she merely quotes Bond's words, " I can only say that Lear was standing in my path and I had to get him out of the way. I couldn't get beyond him to do other things that I also wanted, so I had to come to terms with him."[6] Smith does not try to relate Bond's words to his play so that we can see why and how Lear was standing in Bond's path or why and how, again, Bond had to come to terms with Lear. Instead, she simply ends her article with the conclusion that " Bond completes a play..which does not suffer by comparison with Shakespeare's great original."[7]

Other academic commentators look upon Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern Are Dead in a like manner. For them, Stoppard's play is nothing but a combination of " the brittle wit of Oscar Wilde with mordant humour of Samuel Beckett,"[8] or a " spirited union of materials from various dramatic and non-dramatic sources."[9] They describe its composition as if it had been " neatly prescribed by a recipe: plot and character from Shakespeare folded into a Beckettian ambiance, or vice versa; a dash of concept, echo or tone from the other dramatic or literary sources; and Wittgenstein's philosophy cracked, its language-games separated and used to bind the other ingredients."[10] I agree with Jill Levenson's judgment that Stoppard's play does not resemble the composition of a " pudding."[11] Despite those influences we may recognize in it, it offers a vision as harmonious and distinct as that offered by Shakespeare in Hamlet.

Like those studies of Bond and Stoppard's versions, my Master's thesis (written and submitted to Am. Univ. of Cairo in 1982) did not provide a theoretical perspective. It was a comparative study of Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead and Shakespeare's Hamlet in which I exclusively dealt

with points of similarity in dramatic technique and Language.

To provide the required theoretical perspective, the present study follows a two-fold strategy. While it deals with the tradition of influence, showing what debts Bloom owes to his precursors and how his theory can be adapted to the needs of dramatic criticism, it also tests the theory against the relationship between Bond and Stoppard's versions and the Shakespearean originals.

One main aim of this research is to formulate a theoretical perspective by which we can define the relationship between old and new dramatic works. Another aim is to see in what way Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence can operate when applied to the dramatists Edward Bond, Tom Stoppard, and their relationship to William Shakespeare.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The primary aim of the first chapter is to provide the required theoretical perspective. Therefore, Bloom's concept of influence will be considered in relation to those concepts of W. Jackson Bate

and T. S. Eliot, his two most important precursors.[12] In the light of chapter One's conclusions, we shall investigate, in the following four chapters, the relationship between the various playwrights.

CHAPTER ONE

AT THE CROSS-ROADS

Influence, as conceived by Harold Bloom, seems to have a history as old as literary history itself. Tracing it, W. Jackson Bate could look back to " an almost forgotten" Egyptian writer of 2000 B.C. " Khakheperresenb," Bate tells us, " who inherited in his literary legacy no Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, or Dickens - no formidable variety of literary genres available in thousands of libraries - yet who still left the poignant epigram:

> Would I had phrases that are not known, utterances that are strange, in new language that has not been used, free from repetition, not an utterance which has grown stale,which men of old have spoken."[1]

Influence as anxiety or, as Bate puts it," the remorseless deepening of self-consciousness before the rich and intimidating legacy of the past,"[2] has been felt, indeed half-acknowledged in all ages. Sixteen centuries ago, Longinus in On The Sublime wonders " why minds of a high order of sublimity and greatness

are no longer produced," and " why this world-wide barenness of literature...pervades our life."[3] " Every age," Ortega y Gasset states, " will inevitably feel itself " empty" in comparison with the past." Bate assures us that this dilemma, the anxiety of influence, has been privately wrestled with by major writers from the Renaissance to the present day. The nagging questions which have " haunted every poet since Milton, however much he may have resisted" them, are: what is there left to write? and how, as craftsmen, do poets get not only new subjects but a new idiom? Bate points out that the anxiety of influence has become the greatest single problem art has had to face, and that it will become increasingly so.[4] Bloom goes further to predict that:

> There is no escape. It is simply the given, and there is nothing we can do. In fact all we can do is keep increasing it, and this of course is where Hegel is the prphet. Hegel prophesied that this must finally mark the death of art, because this growing self-awareness, this growing self-consciousness must finally be destructive of the aesthetic.[5]

I

Bate is Bloom's immediate precursor. Indeed, in Bate's book The Burden of the Past and The English Poet (1970) we can trace back the basic premise of Bloom's theory which he proposed later in his book The Anxiety of Influence (1973). Bloom's argument is based on Bate's successful bold attempt to pose the problem and find ways to bring it out into the open. Bate approached it through discussing several diagnoses advanced by major writers of different periods and, after each diagnosis, he would restate the problem, opening up avenues in many directions. Bloom's theory, as we will show, is nothing but one of those directions, which Bloom manages to explore, if not thoroughly exhaust.

Investigating the diagnoses, Bate finds that most major writers between the Renaissance - the epoch of Shakespeare and Milton - and the Victorians and moderns (1660- 1830), are intimidated by the " brilliantly creative achievement"[6] before them. Looking back upon the writers before the Restoration, Dryden, for instance, described them as " the giant race before the flood."[7] Alexander Pope, Dryden's successor, could say " if

ever there was any author who deserved the name of an original, it was Shakespeare."[8] Goethe frankly admitted that " Shakespeare has already exhausted the whole of human nature in all directions and in all depths and heights," and that " for those who came after him, there remains nothing more to do."[9]

On the other hand, Bate realized that the views of such English writers as Johnson, Edward Young, and Blake are not practically useful even though they addressed the problem of originality in more optimistic terms. Johnson believed that originality was always possible if only we " shed our superstitious reverence of the dead."[10] Similarly, Blake could say " Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead."[11] Young's advice was that the writer should " pull himself up by his own bootstraps," and, still, " imitate the general spirit of the past writers we admire."[12] None of these views, however, tells the writer how he can practically proceed to achieve that originality attributed to Shakespeare.

Bate's own diagnosis is that we have been caught in a self-created prison. We can get ourselves out of this self-created prison only if we know how to reduce that taboo, originality, to size. " The complaint," he says, "that all

topics are preoccupied" is repeated only by the timid or by the militantly conservative, a complaint " by which some discourage others and some themselves".[13] The burden of the past is the burden of choice. The Romantics succeeded because they knew when and how to make their own choice. They were the children of the period which was beginning " to develop antibodies,"[14] and learning how " to lift the burden of the past or to shift it to one side."[15] The greatest lesson we can learn from them, Bate advises us, is " the value of boldness."[16] Despite the odds against them, the eighteenth century could face the whole question of the beautiful. Their boldness involved " directly facing up to what we admire and then to be like it."[17] Bate informs us that the old Greek ideal of education, of paideia, means " to be like the excellence, or arete, that we have come to admire - whatever our self-defensive protests."[18]

Bate's conclusion, which Bloom takes later as his point of departure, is that a major achievement of the eighteenth century Enlightenment was their discovery of how " open and elusive (indeed potentially self- contradictory) " the premise of " originality " is, and

from this, the necessity of creating " their own ideal of originality."[19] This is where Bloom is the disciple of Bate, the Enlightenment, and the Romantics. He took from them this premise of originality as open, elusive, and potentially self-contradictory, and determined that he could be original as a critic only if he could build his whole theory of influence on " the essence of neurosis," conflict.[20] Bloom himself admits that " in so far as I find a wavering center in my own work, it would be the notion of the agon."[21] Indeed, this notion of conflict (agon) is the single principle which we have to keep in mind while comparing Bloom's concept of influence to Eliot's sense of tradition.

11

M. H. Abrams claims that the phrase " the anxiety of influence" is used by Bloom to identify " his radical revision" of the standard theory that influence is a " direct borrowing, or assimilation, of the materials and features found in earlier writers."[22] Abrams' statement implies that the theory of influence before Bloom was a one-way system. This implication, I believe, is an over-simplification. In fact,

the same implication has been made in recent studies on T. S. Eliot by critics who maintain that Eliot saw tradition as mere repetition. Before we proceed, it is necessary to come to a better understanding of Eliot's concept of tradition.

Close study of Eliot's two essays " Tradition and the Individual Talent " and " The Function of Criticism at The Present Time," written more than fifty years before Bloom proposed his theory, reveals that Eliot saw tradition, not as a stagnant pool, but as a friction or tension between the poet and his tradition, the present and the past, the new and old works of art. Indeed, Eliot even warns us against the implication made by Abrams and other critics. Eliot states:

> Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its sucesses, " tradition" should positively be discouraged.[23]

For Eliot, tradition, as he himself says, " is a matter of much wider significance."[24] In his view, the poet does not

" inherit" a tradition, he must obtain it by " great labour". To obtain it, the poet must have the historical sense which involves " a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence."[25] It is this historical sense which compels the poet " to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous order."[26] This historical sense is " a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal." [27] Eliot was clearly aware that no poet " has his complete meaning alone," and he went even further to state that " the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past."[28] Bloom's seemingly bold notion of the belated poet determining his precursor's law or the strong poet failing to beget himself and waiting for his son who will " define him as he defined his Poetic Father,"[29]can be seen here as an echo of the first half of Eliot's statement.

In "Tradition and The Individual Talent" and " The Function of Criticism at The Present Time," Eliot offers a

theory of poetry whose practical object is to direct our attention to the poetry itself rather than the poet. Eliot describes his theory as an " impersonal theory" of poetry to distinguish it from the poetic theory commonly associated with Romanticism, literary and philosophic. Eliot is attacking the importance attached to personality and the shift from the objective outlook of the classical world to the subjective outlook of Romanticism. As he represents his theory and Romantic theory, the one is impersonal and objective and the other is personal and subjective.

The poet, Eliot says, in virtue of having acquired an historical sense, stands in a subtle relation to the entire body of poetry before him. He can be fully appreciated and understood only when he is set within this body of poetry which Eliot conceives as " an ideal order." Eliot's notion of the ideal order in poetry and criticism is a " principle of aesthetic, not merely historical criticism."[30]

Again, poetry, Eliot observes, is not properly to be understood as the expression of personal emotion: it is a working up of concentration of impressions and experiences. What the poet has to express is not " a personality," but " a particular medium."[31]

It is the practice, Eliot tells us, to value in a poet's work the part which is individual. But, he says, if we approach a poet without this prejudice we will find that " not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."[32]

Lewis Freed has suggested that Eliot's ideas of tradition and historical sense are developed from the particular way " in which he conceives the relation of the past and the present."[33] By the past, Freed explains, Eliot does not mean " the past of archaeology or of philology - a record of objects, events, ideas institututions, or literary monuments classified according to types and periods representing factual knowledge of bygone times."[34] Nor does he mean by it " the past which we reconstruct with the help of such knowledge and by an exercise of the historical imagination, projecting ourselves into other periods and re-enacting modes of thought and feeling other than our own."[35] In Eliot's view, there is only one time, which is ever present: for there is no time apart from consciousness, and consciousness is always a present fact. " Past and present are

distinctions within time but for the poet they are one."[36] the poet lives in the present and his awareness of the past is part of his experience, so that the past and present are together in a moment of consciousness. Thus, the past which lives in the present is the present moment of the past. The poet who acquires the historical sense is conscious not of what is dead, but of what is " already living."

However, recent studies of Eliot still suggest that Eliot was " caught in the aporia of tradition versus innovation,"[37] or of impersonal versus personal, and his statements were inescapably mysterious, if not inconsistent. In fact, Eliot himself was fully aware that he was confronting this aporia as we can easily detect in his essay " The Use of Poetry." After stating that genuine taste is " inextricable from the development of personality and character,"[38] he adds, in a footnote, that he refuses to be drawn into any discussion of the definition of these two terms. Eliot could assert that poetry, though originating in the depths of the poet, is an expression not of personality, but of feelings and emotions which are extra-personal. Yet he could also attribute the superiority of Yeats'

later poetry over his earlier to the greater expression in it of a unique personality and explain the apparent contradiction by distinguishing the impersonality of craftsmanship and that of the poet who turns his personal experience into an expression of general truths. Further, when he deals with Milton's influence on the English language, he declares that it is implicitly the personality of Milton which is in question - " not specifically his beliefs, or his language or versification, but the beliefs as realized in that particular personality, and his poetry as an expression of it."[39]

Obviously, Eliot knew that he was confronting an area in which all opposites simultaneously coexist, and Bloom, drawing upon Romanticism and Bate, knew that this is the cross-roads where Bloom could meet his Laius, Eliot. This is precisely where Bloom could advise us to " clear our minds of Eliotic cant," and " give up the failed enterprise of seeking to understand any single poem as an entity in itself." Bloom realized that this aporia of tradition versus innovation, of text versus author, is the cross-roads where he could establish his own difference and, still, be mistaken for his father. In this

particular sense, Bloom's idea that poetic influence deals with " the aboriginal poetic self"[40] can be taken as one side of the coin whose other side is Eliot's " sense of tradition." But, in his attempt to empty out his precursor's reading of tradition, Bloom does not realize that his own reading is not so absolute as it seems, because it exists only as a difference. Eliot, Bate, and Bloom, like all precursors and their followers, are envolved in Derrida's Scene of Writing,which allows all to exist only as differences in a network of differential relationships. From these differences we can learn how to reconstruct our understanding of this aporia of tradition versus innovation or, in our case, of the Shakespearean originals versus Bond and Stoppard's new versions.

III

If Bloom applies his theory only to lyric form, Bate recognizes the necessity of providing a theory of influence which can deal with all literary genres. Indeed, Bate, unlike Bloom, realizes that " the major Romantics never lost their healthful confidence that in or through the drama...the open door could eventually be found."[41] The Romantics opened up the

subjective world but " refused to view it as an end in itself."[42] Their greatest lyric poetry can be " described as an attempt to begin a new approach to drama."[43] Bate believes that the dramatic form is the rescue from that destruction of the aesthetic which Bloom predicts because the dramatic form has the aspiration toward " a unity of being in which all the usual distinctions - objective, man and nature, intellect and feeling, conscious and unconscous- were...only aspects or modes of the whole."[44] Bate informs us of Keats' habit of rereading Shakespeare's King Lear before beginning each large new effort. Bate goes even further to speculate that:

> ...Keats, if he had lived even to the age of fifty (and therefore had five times his active career of five years still before him at his disposal), would have fulfilled the hope he mentions (1819) after writing the odes, Lamia, and the Fall of Hyperion: that a few long poems, " written in the course of the next six years... would nerve me up to the writing of a few fine Plays- my greatest ambition when I do feel ambitious.[45]

However, despite Bate's success in showing how the Romantics faced up to the notion of originality, he seems to

be intimidated by the fearful legacy of Shakespeare. Bate realizes that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were free to be and to do what they were and did because they were not yet shackled by our modern " petulant demand for originality."[46] They could look upon the mass of old plays before them as only " waste stock, in which any experiment could be tried."[47] But Bate himself wonders:

> But what were you to do? Treat Shakespeare himself and other writers in the same spirit as only so much " waste stock"? You might in a moment of madness or desperation try to do so, or pretend to do so. But you could be sure that the sympathy of those around you would begin to chill,and you could understand why.[48]

It seems that when Bate made these remarks he was not aware that Tom Stoppard and Edward Bond, like many others before them, were engaged in the " mad and desperate " task of treating Shakespeare as " waste stock." In 1965 Stoppard started his first version of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead and in August, 1967, the play was presented by the National Theatre at the Old Vic. In 1968, Bond began thinking of his Lear and in

September, 1971, the play had its first performance by the Royal Court Theatre. The two plays consciously attempt to work with and against many of the concerns of Shakespeare. What is needed now from dramatic criticism is to acknowledge, modify, and reconstruct the differences within the theory of influence so as to provide a criterion by which we can decide how far the two modern versions are original.

IV

Given a frame, simplified and reduced to its basic premise, Bloom's concept of influence can be situated within the theory of Poetic Influence and, thus, be useful for the purposes of this research. Bloom's notion of the Scene of Instruction can serve as the frame required. By this Scene of Instruction Bloom explains how writers pass from origins to repetitions and continuity and thence to the discontinuity that marks all revisionism. Since " every Primal Scene is necessarily a stage performance, or a fantastic fiction," Bloom considers his Scene of Instruction as primal for writers like Freud's two Primal Scenes, of the

Oedipal fantasy and of the slaying of a father by his rival sons. " Behind any Scene of Writing, at the start of every textual encounter," Bloom says, there is an unequal love, "where necessarily the giving famishes the receiver. The receiver is set on fire, and yet the fire belongs only to the giver."[49] In this Scene of Instruction, the belated writer has the compulsion to repeat the precursor's patterns in an attempt to " recover the prestige of origins."[50] But " poetic repetition quests, despite itself, for the mediated vision of the fathers, since such mediation holds open the perpetual possibility of one's own sublimity, one's election to the realm of True Instructors."[51] In this Scene of Instruction which is founded upon an encounter trapped in time, the receiver tries to gain control over the text and be its first interpreter. The first element to note about the Scene of Instruction is " its absolute firstness; it defines priority."[52]

Bloom's own view is that influence inescapably involves a drastic distortion of the work of a predecessor:

> Poetic Influence - when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of

> creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-caricature, of distortion, of perverse, of wilful revisionism.[53]

In Bloom's theory of influence, the dramatist is motivated to write when his imagination is seized upon by a work of a predecessor. The belated dramatist's attitude to his precursor, as in Freud's analysis of the Oedipal relation of son to father, is compounded not only of love and admiration, but (since a strong dramatist has a compelling need to be autonomous and absolutely original) of hate, envy and fear of the precursor's pre-emption of the son's imaginative space.

To safeguard his own sense of autonomy and priority, the belated dramatist swerves away from his precursor by so reading his precursor's play as to excute a corrective movement in his own play, which implies that the precursor's play went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved precisely in the direction that the new play moves. In the new

play, the dramatist tries to complete his precursor antithetically by so reading the parent-play as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough. In short, in the truly new play the playwright manages to create a movement towards discontinuity with his precursor through an antithetical proceeding.

In the following four chapters, we will posit that Edward Bond, Tom Stoppard, and Shakespeare are engaged in Bloom's Scene of Instruction. We will try to answer these questions: How do the contemporary playwrights try to create a movement of discontinuity with Shakespeare in their own plays? In what way or ways do Bond and Stoppard proceed antithetically? In the words of Eliot, what are those " most individual parts" of Bond and Stoppard's work in which Shakespeare, their ancestor, asserts his "immortality most vigorously"? Where and how do those individual parts or differences occur in the belated encounter texts, Bond's Lear and Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. It is hoped that the answer of the

above questions will help us not only to define the relationship between the two modern versions and the Shakespearean originals but to show how far the two new plays are themselves original.

CHAPTER TWO

BOND VERSUS SHAKESPEARE

The basic difference between Shakespeare's play and Bond's version consists of Bond's concern not only for the personal tragedy of the characters (Lear, Cordelia, Kent, Gloucester, and Edgar), but for the tragedy of a society that revels in moralized and institutionalized patterns of aggression. Bond argues that Shakespeare, in spite of his original design, produced " a total arraignment of conventional authority and the morality used to explain and excuse it."[1] The antithesis of justice against law and order is one central strand of Bond's Lear. " The play demonstrates one's rights, which can only be obtained in a society of justice and not one of law and order... justice is the experience of liberation."[2] This antithesis is, indeed, central to Bond's vision.

Bond is a skillful and self-conscious artist, well aware of his own aims, ideas , and methods. For some critics, he " probably has formulated a social philosophy more syste-

matically than any dramatist since Shaw."[3] Bond's preparation for Lear was more extensive than for the plays before it. His first public thoughts and notes for the play show not only an overpowering necessity of escaping from the shadow of Shakespeare which he felt, but also the development of his own antithetical statement.

When Bond first conceived the idea of writing his own version of King Lear, he approached Shakespeare's version in a sceptical and questioning spirit:

> I very much object to the worshipping of that play by the academic theatre...because it is a totally dishonest experience." Oh, yes, you know, this marvellous man suffering, and all the rest of it." I think that at the time it would have been a completely different experience to see Lear reacting in the Tudor set up...Now, I think it's an invitation to be artistically lazy, to say, " Oh, how..sensitive we are and this marvellous artistic experience we're having, understanding this play," and all the rest of it...He's a Renaissance figure and he doesn't impinge on our society as much as he would. So that I would like to rewrite the play to try to make it more relevant.[4]

Initially, Bond thought of excluding the figure of Lear himself; " If you get rid of the King, the play becomes much more intersting. He is a Renaissance preacher addressing himself to the Gods. He tells all the lies. He belongs to the seventeenth century, but he is irrelevant."[5] Yet, three months after beginning Lear, in October, 1969, Bond had changed his mind and brought Lear back into his play.

> I'm not criticising King Lear in any way. It's a play for which (It's a stupid thing to say)... I have enormous admiration, and I've learnt more from it than from any other play. But...as a society we use the play in a wrong way. And it's for that reason I would like to rewrite it so that we now have to use the play for ourselves, for our society, for our time, for our problems.[6]

Bond's attention, as his notes on Lear indicates, was basically focussed on the figure of Lear because Bond knew that Shakespeare's thesis of authority, law, and order was wholly based on the figure of Lear. Bond realized that he could swerve away from his precursor and proceed antithetically towards a movement of discontinuity only if he could differently deal with the center of Shakespeare's world:

> I can only say that Lear was standing in my path and I had to get him out of the way. I couldn't get beyond him to do other things that I also wanted, so I had to come to terms with him.[7]

In fact, it was more a question of Bond's coming to terms dialectically with his precursor, Shakespeare. Bond finally returns the figure of Lear to his version only to represent a thesis dominated by Bond's antithesis. In Bond's Lear, not only the King and his evil daughters but also Cordelia are corrupted by the necessities of power. They are all caught in the moralized and institutionalized pattern of aggression. Bond's urge to reinforce his thesis of the pattern of violence and the need for justice compels him to change drastically the pattern of relationships in Shakespeare's play.

In Shakespeare's King Lear, Cordelia aroused a strong hostile reaction in Bond: " one of the very important things in the play was to re-define the relationship between Cordelia and Lear. I don't want to make this seem easy or slick, but Cordelia in Shakespeare's play is an absolute menace. I mean she's a very

dangerous type of person.." [8] Bond, in the early notes for the play (21 January,1970), describes Cordelia as " a sort of unsuccessful Robespierre," the greatest force that destroys Lear. In Bond's play Cordelia is not one of Lear's daughters. Bond changes the relationship but,significantly, keeps the name of Cordelia to be given to the counter-force which will destroy Lear. Yet, both Lear and Cordelia in Bond's play are defeated by their own premise of violence. Both perpetuate and moralize violence and the suppression of truth. What is important for Bond is not the question of inheritance and authority but how society creates and perpetuates violence:

> It's not a question of inheritance, who gets to the top: it's to do with the total structure, the complete dance, the force that holds it together. In my play there can be no Albany waiting in the wings.[9]

In Bond's play, Cordelia's revolution demonstrates how violence may be used to reinforce the very things it initially revolts against. "Violence," Bond says, " has its own logistics- and terror and fear will follow from its use. If the use is large (as in Stalin's regime) the terror and fear will be large-

and this will enforce the use of more violence."[10] Therefore, Cordelia, for Bond, is a Stalin-figure.

In the Preface to Lear, Bond tries to define " our innate aggression," or as he conceives it, " our original sin." Though aggression is an " ability" and not a " necessity," human beings in our contemporary society have been caught in this vicious circle of organized and moralized violence. For Bond, human violence is more dangerous than that of animals:

> ...The predator hunting its prey is violent but not aggressive in the human way. It wants to eat, not destroy, and its violence is dangerous to the prey but not to the predator. Animals only become aggressive- that is destructive in the human sense- when their lives, territory or status in their group are threatened, or when they mate or are preparing to mate. Even then the aggression is controlled. Fighting is usually ritualized, and the weaker or badly-placed animal will be left alone when it runs away or formally submits. Men use much of their energy and skill to make more efficient weapons to destroy each other, but animals have often evolved in ways to ensure they they can't destroy each other.[11]

Our society, Bond believes, justifies, moralizes, and perpetuates aggression when it bases its whole structure on these " natural feelings of opposition"[12] inherent in human nature. Thus, society becomes an organization " held together by the aggression it creates."[13] Law and order are the means by which society justifies and maintains aggression which eventually creates disruptive injustice. For Bond, power-politics, whether of the left or right, is nothing but an institutionalised and legitimized form of injustice because

> It is so easy to subordinate justice to power ... when this happens power takes on the dynamics and dialectics of aggression, and then nothing is really changed. Marx did not know about this problem, and Lenin discovered it when it was too late.[14]

To bring more directly home to us his radical concept of our " diseased culture," which he believes to be more relevant to us than Shakespeare's concept of law and order, Bond must go further than Shakespeare. He can swerve away from his precursor only by confronting him and using his material differently. In Shakespeare's original the mad Lear cries out in the hovel: " Then let them anatomise Regan, see what breeds

about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" Accepting the challenge, Bond, in the belated textual encounter, Lear, answers this despairing question by literally using Shakespeare's idea and by providing a con - crete scene of violence. Bond " anatomises " Fontanelle to show that human existence is nothing but an act of violence:

Lear: So much blood and bits and pieces packed in with all that care. Where is the... where?..... Where is the beast? The blood is as still as a lake...Where? Where?

4th Prisoner: What's the man asking ?

Lear: She sleeps inside like a lion and a lamb and a child. The things are so beautiful. I am astonished. I have never seen anything so beautiful. If I had known she was so beautiful ..... how I would have loved her...Did I make this - and destroy it?...I knew nothing, saw nothing, learned nothing! Fool! Fool! Worse than I knew.(He puts his hands into Fontanelle and brings them out with organs and viscera. The soldiers react awkwardly and ineffectually) Look at my dead daughter! ..I killed her! Her blood is on my hands! Destroyer! Murderer! and I must begin again. I must walk through my life, step after step, I must walk in weariness and

> bitterness, I must become a child, hungry and stripped and shivering in blood. I must open my eyes and see! [15]

To provoke his audience into viewing society rationally and objectively, Bond uses what he himself has labelled " the aggro-effect" to distinguish it from the Brechtian " alienation effect". While Brecht aims at distancing his audience emotionally so as to rationalize objectively, Bond believes that disturbing his audience emotionally is necessary to galvanize their consciences:

> In contrast to Brecht, I think it's necessary to disturb an audience emotionally, to involve them emtionally in my plays, so I've had to find ways of making that " aggro-effect " more complete. which is in a sense to surprise them... [16]

Bond has used and developed his aggro-effect technique in all his plays before Lear. In each play he juxtaposes a cluster of powerful theatrical images which, indeed, genuinely reinforce his uncompromising radical vision. In The Pope's Wedding, Saved, Early Morning, and Narrow Road to The Deep North he has consistently developed not only this concept of moralised violence, which is central to his vision, but his

" aggro-effect" technique. In Lear, he seems to have perfected both his ends and means.

Bond's aggro-effect technique has been severely attacked by many critics. Indeed, it is because of this technique that Bond has been " subjected to perhaps the most violent storm of protest and denigration aimed at any dramatist since Ibsen."[17] In fact, the hostility which greeted Saved paralleled the first English response to Ghosts.

Bond's technique and use of violence in the theatre can be properly understood when we compare it to Peter Brook's view of the use of violence in the theatre. In his book The Empty Space, Brook asserts that in real life, the shocking atrocity stories, or the photograph of the napalmed child,

> are the roughest of experiences - but they open the spectator's eyes to the need for an action which in the event they somehow sap. It is as though the fact of experiencing a need vividly quickens the need and quenches it in the same breath. What then can be done? I know of one acid test in the theatre. And it is literally an acid test. When a performance is over, what remains? Fun can be forgotten, but powerful

> emotion also disappears and good arguments lose their thread. When emotion and argument are harnessed to a wish from the audience to see more clearly into itself - then something in the mind burns. The event scorches on to the memory an outline, a taste, a smell, a picture. It's the play's central image that remains, its silhouette, and if the elements are highly blended, this silhouette will be its meaning, this shape will be the essence of what it has to say. When years later I think of a strikingly theatrical experience I find a kernel engraved in my memory: two tramps under a tree, an old woman dragging a cart, a sergeant dancing....I haven't a hope of remembering the meanings precisely, but from the kernel I can reconstruct a set of meanings. Then a purpose will have been served. A few ours could amend my thinking for life. This is almost, but not quite impossible to achieve.[18]

Brook's words can be used to shed light on an essential part of Bond's originality. In Lear's notes Bond's search for what " burns in the mind," those kernel images which can be engraved in memory, is evident: " My own version of Lear...isn't enough. I must start from my own image, and not merely my own ideas...

the reversal of the academic moral/artistic/theatrical myth isn't enough, the making reality of Lear mythology isn't enough, because the play isn't to get its life merely from being a commentary on King Lear, or an attack on it or correction of it. The play must have a structure rooted in itself, which then throws light across onto King Lear...The play must be its own dynamo and experience...[19]

In the belated encounter text, Lear, Bond's attempt to free himself from Shakespeare, to bring about a movement of discontinuity and antithetically to dominate his precursor's text, is demonstratively apparent. In the following chapter we will examine the dramatic structure of Lear, its imagery and characters to identify the differences through which Bond sought to be the dominant interpreter of the new textual encounter, Lear.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCONTINUITY AND THE DOMINANCE OF ANTITHESIS

In the Preface to Lear, Bond offers a thematic summary of his play's dramatic structure: " Act One shows a world dominated by myth. Act Two shows the clash between myth and reality, between superstitious men and the autonomous world. Act Three shows a resolution of this, in the world we prove real by dying in it."[1]

If Shakespeare uses the Gloucester sub-plot to underscore the main plot's significances and, thus, intensifies the tragic effect, Bond, to establish and reinforce his antithetical statement, not only ignores the entire Gloucester sub-plot but embeds the thesis of King Lear's main plot in Act One of Lear. Bond's antithetical statement is extraordinarily intensified by the one-sided-structure and the development of scenes of the

whole drama. " The tectonic structure" of Bond's drama, Horst Oppel and Sandra Christenson observe, " rests chiefly upon the fundaments of parallel and contrast scenes. There is hardly a single scene in Lear which does not have a special function in the whole fabric of the dramatic structure; each one, in its own way, contributes to the illumination of the demoniac interplay between violence and counter-violence."[2] Using variation and creative repetition, Bond compels us to succumb to " the inescapable conclusion that there is no more room for humanity in a world which is founded only on the interplay between violence and counter-violence."[3] His technique is, therefore, not a stagnant repetition, but a continuous experiment in probing the depths of misfortunes that transform people into slaves."[4]

The myth of Act One concerns the figure of Lear himself, his blinkered refusal to see and understand what is happening around him. From the very beginning Bond presents him as a king exercising absolute authority at the very moment of his own displacement. He creates the conditions of his own overthrow. If Shakespeare's Lear abandons his authority by dividing his kingdom, Bond's Lear is an authority figure over-

taken by revolutionary violence.

Lear begins with the arrival of Lear to inspect the work on progress on a wall being built by forced labour to protect his kingdom. Lear's great enterprise, his lifetime's work,has been the building of a great wall to keep his enemies out and his allies in:

> I started this wall when I was young. I stopped my enemies in the field, but there were always more of them. How could we ever be free ? So I built this wall to keep our enemies out. My people will live behind this wall when I'm dead. You may be governed by fools but you'll always live in peace. My wall will make you free.[5]

The workers and soldiers in the first scene live in fear of Lear because he " always comes looking for trouble." But he does not come intending to shoot one of the workers, wrongly suspected of sabotage. Also, his daughters, Bodice and Fontanelle, do not come proposing to tell their father of their impending marriages to his enemies, the Dukes of North and Cornwall. Bond is careful to make what happens in the scene grow directly from the events of the scene. Lear himself precipitates the events and creates the conditions of his own overthrow by deliberately

using the accidental death of a worker to force the pace of work on the wall, because " otherwise my visit's wasted." Lear is given the best motives, and his actions are those of a man utterly convinced of his own rightness. To protect his people, to put into effect what he has learned from history and his life, makes the shooting of one worker an insignificant irritation. The tragic irony of the scene is given an additional savage twist when Lear himself shoots the worker and in the same breath proclaims his love for his people:

> Lear: My enemies will not destroy my work! I gave my life to these people. I've seen armies on their hands and knees in blood, insane women feeding dead children at their empty breasts, dying men spitting blood at me with their last breath, our brave young men in tears -. But I could bear all this! When I'm dead my people will live in freedom and peace and remember my name, no- venerate it ! ...They are my sheep and if one of them is lost I'd take fire to hell to bring him out. I loved and cared for all my children...(He shoots THIRD WORKER, and his body slumps forward on the post in a low bow.) There's no more time, it's too late to learn anything.[6]

The first scene of Bond's Lear shows Lear acting with complete autocratic authority. Therefore, he is outraged when he is, for the first time, publicly contradicted by his own daughters. He does not realize that the moment of shooting the worker is itself the moment of disassociation by his daughters. He can not relate cause to effect and understand that he, by murdering the worker, is responsible for what his daughters are or will be. Instead, he resorts to childish tears in his rage against them.

To understand what he has done and to learn, ultimately at the cost of his own life, the true nature of his society and the folly of its power structure, Bond's Lear has a long distance to travel. First, he is to be overthown by a similar act of violence. So, says Bond, " I begin at the revolution."[7] For the first four scenes of the play, the consequences of Lear's actions are played out in the revolt of Bodice and Fontanelle which overthrows him. Scene I,ii shows Lear as he has been and, at the same time, contains the essence of the change in circumstances which is to depose him. Lear seems archaic in his relying on the old strategy which defeated the fathers of North and Cornwall.

Still, he is unable to relate cause to effect and wonders aloud about his daughters: " Where does their vileness come from?"[8] In the following two short scenes (I,iii& I,iv) Bond introduces black farce elements, which some critics consider an essential characteristic of the dramatic technique which he uses to prepare the ground for his own exploration of violence and oppression. In Early Morning, for instance, the theme of cannibalism is first introduced farcically - Len and Joyce stand trial for eating a man while queuing outside the Kilburn Empire to see a film called " Policeman in Black Nylons." Then cannibalism becomes more and more the central image for men devouring and destroying each other. It is a technique " that goes as far back in British drama as the medieval miracle plays, where in the Towneley Secunda Pastorum the farcical sheep-stealing and mock nativity precede and strengthen the serious and real nativity."[9] In Lear Fontanelle and Bodice are presented as " figures of black farce, figures out of Jarry's Ubu Roi, childishly indulging their cruelties and sexual appetites."[10]After initiating the revolution by contracting marriages with their father's enemies, the Dukes of North and

Cornwall, they now complain in bitter asides of their husbands' sexual incompetence. Fontanelle says " When he gets on top of me I'm so angry I have to count to ten. That's long enough. Then I wait till he's asleep and work myself off. I'm not making do with that for long." Similarly, Bodice says " Virility! It'd be easier to get blood out of a stone, and far more probable. I've bribed a major on his staff to shoot him in the battle."[11] This element of black farce becomes more apparent in scene I,iv where Warrington is tortured. His tongue already cut out, he is methodically beaten, while Bodice calmly knits and Fontanelle jumps up and down in perverse childlike merriment:

> Fontanelle: O, Christ, why did I cut his tongue out? I want to hear him scream..smash his hands; ..kill his feet...kill him inside! Make him dead! Father, Father! I want to sit on his lungs!
>
> Bodice: Plain pearl, plain. She was just the same at school.[12]

Bond deliberately uses these black farce and grotesque elements immediately before he moves to confront directly, not in distorted caricature, the intolerable extremities of violence at the end of Act One. Lear, overthrown

by Fontanelle and Bodice, seeks refuge in the pastoral world of the Gravedigger's boy and his wife. But the pastoral dream turns into a nightmare when Lear brings with him his madness and the threat of destruction to the simple world of the Gravedigger's boy and his wife. In the last scene of Act One the soldiers capture the escaped King, kill the boy, and rape his wife. The pastoral alternative is shattered as the wife is raped and the boy is shot and a huge red blood-stain spreads over the the white sheet he is clasping around himself. It is here we realize for the first time that the wife's name is Cordelia . The withholding of Cordelia's name until the end of Act One marks the point at which Bond " emphatically thrusts Shakespeare's play well into the background of his own play."[13] Indeed, this is precisely where we can recognize Bond's attempt to assert the movement of discontinuity with Shakespeare. In the first four scenes of Act One, the Shakespearean echoes are insistent: the ingratitude of Lear's daughters and Lear's madness. To exorcise these Shakespearean echoes, Bond not only introduces the violence of the two daughters on a farcical level but moves to the pastoral alternative where the more serious horrible act of

violence takes place. Further, before we are told that this character's name is Cordelia, we discover that though she is not Lear's daughter in this play, she, like Lear, wants " to put a fence " round herself and her husband, the gravedigger's boy, and " to shut everyone else out."[14] Bond provides her with a different kind of life but keeps the name of Cordelia to imply similarities between herself and Lear. Given her education and given what she sees, she, like Lear, applies her logic and becomes a source of counter-violence. Therefore, Cordelia and her world in Bond's Lear are a variation on the theme of violence which pervades Bond's play. It is at the end of Act One, when the pastoral dream turns into a nightmare, that Bond's strong individual presence asserts itself and the very different direction of his play begins to become clear.

If Bond shows " a world dominated by myth " in Act One, in Act Two he opens up his contemporary world of dream and nightmare, of purgatorial suffering, through which Lear must pass to achieve sanity and understanding. In a succession of powerful haunting scenes Bond dramatises

Lear's education. " What I wanted him to do," Bond says, " was to recognise that they were his daughters - they had been formed by his activity, they were children of his state, and he was totally responsible for them." [15] Put through a trial managed by Bodice, Lear refuses to recognise either his daughter or his own reflection in a mirror that is handed to him:

> How ugly that voice is! That's not my daughter's voice. It sounds like chains on a prison wall....And she walks like something struggling in a sack(Lear glances down briefly at the mirror). No, that's not the king....This is a little cage of bars with an animal in it.... No, no, that's not the king...who shut that animal in that cage? Let it out. Have you seen its face behind the bars? There's a poor animal with blood on its head and tears running down its face.[16]

Lear becomes lost in his speculations and his daughters continue to goad him: Bodice says she will " polish " the mirror every day and see " it's not cracked", Fontanelle, seeing Lear's tears, relives her enjoyment of Warrington's torture. Lear's vision of injustice gradually broadens so that his last two lines in II, i,suggest that he " hears all the victims cry, all the

people who ever passed through the courtroom."[17] Yet, although he can see the blood of the victims of the daughters' injustice, he is not yet ready to recognise his own responsibilities. He attributes cruelty to his daughters, or as he puts it, the monsters who have replaced them:

> My daughters have been murdered and these monsters have taken their place! I hear all their victims cry, where is justice?[18]

In II,ii Lear comes to his cell still agitated about the trial and says " I must forget" because he knows he will go mad if he can not forget. " The secret of playing the scene," says Bond, " is to consider II,i and II,ii as one scene for Lear "[19] as he tries in various ways to distance himself from the animal he has seen in the mirror. Preoccupied as he is with the imminent destruction of the world, he takes very little notice of the Ghost of the Gravedigger's boy who enters the cell. The Ghost is always there when Lear wants to escape from reality and responsibility. It is the Ghost which calls up the ghosts of Lear's children, who then pathetically demonstrate why they are as they are. The scene shows how far back Lear's mistakes reach.

The scene is dramatically significant because it explains how far family and society are responsible for shaping or misshaping their children. At this point Lear can see an end to the pain in a vision of the future but the vision slips away as soon as it is established when he is presented with the Old Orderly, one his own victims. The Old Orderly has been imprisoned for years though he was " a survivor" who never challenged anyone directly. He stands as a victim of the pattern of violence which Lear initiated:

> I come in 'ere thousands a years back, 'undreds a thousands. I don't know what I come in for. I forgot. I 'eared so many tell what they come in for it's all mixed up in me 'ead. I'eard every crime in the book confessed t' me. Must be a record. Don't know which was mine now. Murder? Robbin'? Violence? I'd like t' know. Just t' put me mind t' rest. Satisfy me conscience. But no one knows now. It's all gone. Long ago. The records is lost. 'Undreds a years back....[20]

The Old Orderly is one of the people Lear saw being dragged through the courtroom while on trial. But Lear can not make the connection and, instead, retreats to the Ghost who is another of

his victims. For the first time in the scene, Lear really " sees" the Ghost, sees what he has destroyed, and he has to live with the dead, his creation, before he can feel compassion for others:

Ghost: Let me stay with you, Lear. When I died I went somewhere. I don't know where it was. I waited and nothing happened. And then I started to rot, like a body in the ground. Look at my hands, they're like an old man's. They're withered. I'm young but my stomach's shrivelled up and the hair's turned white. Look, my arms! Feel how thin I am. (Lear doesn't move.) Are you afraid to touch me?

Lear: No.

Ghost: Feel.

Lear: (hesitates, Feels). Yes, thin.

Ghost: I'm afraid. Let me stay with you, keep me here, please.

Lear: Yes, yes, Poor boy. Lie down by me. Here. I'll hold you. We'll help each other. Cry while I sleep, and I'll cry and watch you while you sleep. We'll take turns. The sound of the human voice will comfort us.[21]

The scene ends with the two, Lear and the Ghost, the cause and the effect, holding each other in a " frightening tableau." Yet, this is only the beginning of the nightmare. Act Two leaves Lear and the Ghost in scenes three and four to show the effects of the civil war on Cordelia,who has become the leader of a guerrilla's army, and on the forces of Bodice and Fontanelle. The two brief scenes of revolution and counter-revolution are set in the rival camps. At once, we can see clearly where Cordelia's circumstances have brought her. Violence and power has turned her into a woman of absolute determination. She, like Lear at the beginning of the play, calmly asserts the necessity of shooting the Wounded Soldier because he has become of no use to the guerrillas. She finds his death regrettable but inevitable in order to achieve power. In a letter of 18 March 1977, Bond tersely states that

> Cordelia represents Stalin, it's as simple as that...The simple fact is that if you behave violently, you create an atmosphere of violence,which generates more violence. If you create a violent revolution, you always create a reaction...Lenin thinks for example that he can use violence for

> specific ends. He does not understand that he will produce Stalin, and indeed must produce a Stalin...[22]

The rapid and tense movement of Act Two shows us the mechanics of violence. In scene four Bodice and Fontanelle are shown as puppets in the vicious circle of violence. Both have become the victim and the aggressor. For the conclusion of the act, Bond returns us to the prison and the caged animals within it. Now, a chain of prisoners moves along a country road and Lear is one of the chain gang. Then the defeated Fontanelle is added to the chain and, in her turn, is manacled. Lear is still in full retreat from the animal in the mirror but he is massively self-absorbed and can not recognise Fontanelle, who is captured and attached to the chain of prisoners as Cordelia's forces take control. But it is the grimmer reality of political execution and the ever present risk of violence leading to more violence which will force him to get outside his self-centred thoughts. Fontanelle is shot, and the Fourth Prisoner, a doctor, seeking to demonstrate his usefulness to the new regime, prepares for the autopsy on Fontanelle's body. Lear is shocked

when he sees his daughter's corpse because

> He expects to find something hideous but can't ...now he sees a human being for the first time. It's important to Lear that he finds something hideous. He's killed thousands of people fighting her because she was wicked. But he can't find anything hideous. He should be insistent that she was cruel and angry and hard...When he says,' If I had known she was so beautiful...,' it is a rejection of everything he's ever said or ever done- he wouldn't have built the wall... etc.[23]

Lear's shock grows as he takes his full place in the scene, and truths are pushed further home to him when Bodice is brought into the cell. He shows his remaining daughter the organs and viscera of her dead sister. Bodice tries pathetically to avoid her sister's fate and, ironically, demands justice in court. But things revert back to normal with her prolonged and messy death. Now, Lear thinks of how he is to open his eyes and see. He, then, at this moment, finds his answer to the question posed in Shakespeare's play. There is no cause in nature, that makes these hard hearts. It

is in man, not nature. And Lear takes upon himself a total, almost Christ-like responsibility for man's destructiveness. Lear now can see what he has done:

> Lear: Look! I killed her! Her blood is on my hands! Destroyer! Murderer! And now I must begin again. I must walk through my life, step after step, I must walk in weariness and bitterness, I must become a child, hungry and stripped and shivering in blood, I must open my eyes and see![24]

Aptly enough, however, Bond ends the act with a crowning act of violence; Lear is savagely and " scientifically" blinded by the Fourth Prisoner. Though Bond has neglected Gloucester's story in Shakespeare's play, he keeps the idea of blindness and insight to reinforce his own thesis. Lear's blindness is a kind of savage, theatrical conceit, in which Bond forces together the idea of power and the idea of a cruel blindness, a self-imprisonment associated with authority. Like Gloucester who " stumbled" when he "saw," Lear in Bond's play is blinded, and this cruelty to him affects his capacities radically as he begins to understand,he has to learn again how to act as a man and a politician. Only at this last stage

of the act does the Ghost enter the scene to help Lear out of the cell. Bond takes Lear back to the play's opening scene, near his wall, where he encounters his victims. Outraged by the news that Cordelia is rebuilding the wall and, thus, perpetuating violence, he kneels by his wall and admits the sum of his mistakes:

> Lear: I am the King! I kneel by this wall. How many lives have I ended here?...Men destroy themselves and say it's their duty? It's not possible! How can they be so abused? Cordelia doesn't know what she's doing! I must tell her- write to her...I can't be silent...[25]

Bond's Cordelia becomes the Lear of Act One. She insists as he once did, that building the wall is an essential part of the power game; she has the same conviction that she is the saviour of her people. But Lear is now another figure in the play. He has earned the right to know the truth and what he will choose to do with this knowledge will be the theme of Act III.

For Bond's Lear, " ripeness is not all." He resolves to

commit himself to action. The first three scenes of Act Three show him as formulating his plan of action. He has developed a skill at speaking the truth but he now realises that articulating the truth is useless. Instead of undergoing a reconciliation with Cordelia (as in Shakespeare's play), he decides to confront her as the new head of a people's government. Though Bond establishes her reasons and allows her her conscience in this confrontation, Cordelia admits her failure and Lear recognises his strength. Lear manages to expose the mentality of violence:

> Lear: Listen, Cordelia. You have two enemies, lies and the truth. You sacrifice truth to destroy lies, and you sacrifice life to destroy death. It isn't sane. You squeeze a stone till your hand bleeds and call that a miracle. I'm old, but I'm as weak and clumsy as a child, too heavy for my legs. But I've learned this, and you must learn it or you'll die. Listen, Cordelia. If a God had made the world, might would always be right,that would be so wise, we'd be spared so much suffering. But we made the world- out of our smallness and weakness. Our lives are awkward and fragile and we have only one thing to keep us sane:

pity, and the man without pity is mad.

Cordelia: You only understand self-pity. We must go back, the government's waiting...We have other opponents, more ruthless than you. In this situation a good government acts strongly. I knew you wouldn't co-operate, but I wanted to come and tell you this before we put you on trial: we'll make the society you only dream of.

Lear: It's strange that you should have me killed, Cordelia, but it's obvious you would. How simple! Your Law always does more harm than crime, and your morality is a form of violence.[26]

Significantly, the confrontation takes place immediately before the last scene of Bond's play. While Shakespeare starts his drama with the confrontation, Bond chooses to present it before he takes us to the audacious climax of his play. Bond reverses the structure of King Lear to imply that Shakespeare's play does not have a real confrontation that deals with what Bond believes to be the basis of his antithetical statement. In Bond's play it is fear which forces Lear and Cordelia to build the wall and,thus,perpetuate the pattern of moralised violence. For Bond, fear, not filial ingratitude or inheritance, is deeply rooted in human nature. Indeed, the confrontation scene in Bond's play

marks the completeness of that movement of discontinuity with Shakespeare. Now, Bond can move to the place where, he thinks his precursor failed to reach. In Bond's Lear, the confrontation with Cordelia is for Lear the crucial turning point. In the early scenes of Act III we have seen him as a Tiresias-like figure preaching in parables to the people who come to hear him. After the confrontation Lear realizes that this phase of resignation, of ripe wisdom, is over. He has a journey to go on, and an act to perform. The play's final scene shows Lear at the wall, as in the opening scene, but acting in a different way. Instead of sacrificing a life to build the wall, Lear now sacrifices his own life to unbuild it. Lear sets to work with his bare hands and a shovel to tear down the wall that it has been his life's work, the wall that Cordelia is perpetuating now. He is shot by one of the junior officers in charge of operations. The ending of the play is splendidly dramatic in its gathering together of the play's meaning into a final symbolic action. It is the inevitable climatic movement towards which everything in the play has been leading.

One of the powerful dramatic means which helped Bond to

create the movement of discontinuity with Shakespeare and underscore the dominance of his antithetical statement is his use of theatrical imagery. Leslie Smith believes that Bond's Lear is more successful than Eliot's dramas because Bond's " poetry of the theatre is not dependent on verse: it functions through the concrete action and the physical images of the drama."[27] Bond himself has said " What I begin from is a series of small visual images...when I write, the rhythm - the whole concentration of the writing - requires action. Finally somebody has to get up and do something."[28] Bond's Lear begins and ends with the killing of a man working on the wall. It is one of the main central images of " oppression and confinement" in the play. This image " brilliantly evokes both an ancient landscape and a modern one : we think at one and the same time of the Berlin wall and the Cold War; and of the massive earthworks near Bond's home called Devil's Dyke and Fleam Dyke thrown up by the East Anglians after the departure of the Romans to protect themselves from marauders."[29] Bond begins his play with Lear's tour of inspection in which he could be seen as " any contemporary field marshal or bellicose politician claiming to defend the peace

by preparing for war, and calling self-imprisonment freedom."[30] From the very beginning of the play, the wall has imposed its dark shadow over the action.

Another image central to Bond's meaning is the image of a man as a caged animal. This image reverberates beyond the immediate context and relates to the governed as much as the governors, people and rulers alike, imprisoned within a social and political structure that does not answer their real needs. It is noticeable that Bond uses and develops this image precisely where he tries to assert the movement of discontinuity with Shakespeare and the dominance of his own thesis . Act One , for instance, ends with the caged animals, in a chain of prisoners moving along a country road. The chain includes Lear , Fontanelle, and their victims. It is a vivid theatrical metaphor which acts out the meaning of the play: the vicious circle of violence and oppression in which governors and governed, tyrants and victims end up chained to each other.

Physical theatre imagery is the main dramatic tool used by Bond not only to relate the meaning of his play to its

structure but to escalate the intensity of the dramatic movement. In Act One, for example, the death of the Gravedigger's boy and the raping of his wife are accompanied by the off-stage squealing of pigs as they are slaughtered. This combination of the visual and auditory effects is to return immediately before Lear is shot in the brief but most powerful ending of the play. There is heard off-stage " the distant squealing of angry pigs, further off than at the end of Act One.... The Ghost stumbles in. It is covered with blood. The pig squeals slowly die out."[31] Gored and trampled by the pigs, the Ghost drops dead at Lear's feet as the pig squealing finally stops. Now, the auditory imagery gives way to the imagery of light, of clear vision, and of an understanding that Lear needs before performing his last act:

> I see my life, a black tree by a pool. The branches are covered with tears. The tears are shining with light. The wind blows the tears in the sky. And my tears fall down on me.[32]

Apart from the main characters, Bond presents a group of minor characters which represents the common man and corrupted innocence. These minor figures are not much more than representatives of specific behavior patterns and power constellations in society. While Bond gives his main characters names, he reduces most of the other characters to the title of their function in society with no further differentiation than the numerical or alphabetical order of their appearance on stage. For Bond, these minor characters are mere functionaries of the system, thereby losing their individuality or personal identity. Workers on the wall, soldiers, Prisoners, and Farmers are all alike: they help perpetuate injustice, either through a passive acceptance of the given social morality and of their duty to it, or through an active participation in injustice with the hope of personal advantage or gain. They are all guilty of aggression and violence and, significantly, Lear is shot by the Farmer's son whom Lear once tried to preserve from the clutches of the vicious circle of violence.

To sum up: in the new textual encounter, Lear, Bond's attempt to be the dominant interpreter or, to use Bloom's words, the fire-giver, is evident. The few details which we have examined in the dramatic structure of Lear, its theatrical imagery and characters can substantiate our conclusion that Bond's play has the two qualities which distinguish a really new version: the movement of discontinuity with the precursor and the dominance of the belated dramatist's antithetical statement.

CHAPTER FOUR

STOPPARD AND INFLUENCE

The theoretical perspective of this study ought to cause us to recognise some inadequacies in the vocabulary some critics currently use to describe the composition of Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. Ruby Cohn, for instance, says that Stoppard proved " extremely skillful in dovetailing the Hamlet scenes into the Godot situation" ; Charles Marowitz writes that " Stoppard displays a remarkable skill in juggling the donnés of existential philosophy" ; and Thomas Whitaker suggests " the raisonneur of this clever pastiche is of course The Player... who knowingly plays himself."[1] Such language - " skillful dovetailing," " clever pastiche" - condemns while it praises, not only failing to show us where Stoppard's originality resides in his play but subtly categorizing the play as a derivative piece of workmanship.

As soon as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead appeared in performance, critics recognized its derivation from Shakespeare's Hamlet and Beckett's Waiting For Godot. They have noticed other influences as well: Pirandello, T. S. Eliot, Wilde, Kafka, and Pinter have left their literary or theatrical traces and Ludwig Wittgenstein's Investigations provide philosophical bearings. Stoppard himself seems to be vague or non-committal about some of these influences: " Prufrock and Beckett are the twin syringes of my diet, my arterial system,"; I really wasn't aware of... Pirandello as an influence. It would be very difficult to write a play which was totally unlike Beckett, Pirandello and Kafka..."[2]

From Stoppard's remarks, however, we might expect that allusions in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead to writers other than Beckett and Shakespeare seem to be unintended or superficial. In fact, Stoppard's debt to Waiting For Godot, as he admits, is enormous: "- there's just no telling what sort of effect it had on our society, who wrote because of it, or who wrote in a different way because of it... Of course it

would be absurd to deny my enormous debt to it, and love for it." When he acknowledges his debt to Beckett, Stoppard emphasises what he describes as " a Beckett joke,"[3] meaning a technique which Beckett uses in his plays: " 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."[4]

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead shows some strong influence from Waiting For Godot. Both plays deal with two little men, lacking power and knowledge, who are trying to grapple with a world full of uncertainty. Similarities in characterization and in the relationships between the two main characters in each play can be easily recognised. Guildenstern resembles Vladimir, who is more prone to anguish because he has a livelier imagination than his partner, Estragon, who resembles Rosencrantz. Further, the two plays share familiar theatrical or literary conventions: a minimally localized scene; address to the audience; the use of multitudes of serious and frivolous puns which are integral to the meaning of the play.

Nevertheless, there are basic differences between

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead and Waiting for Godot. The two plays differ structurally in two respects. The structure of Waiting For Godot reflects the process of waiting and is basically circular and repetitive. Critics have generally recognised that the play's two acts suggest a repeated rather than a completed action, and that the second act largely repeats the first. On the contrary, the structure of Stoppard's play is basically linear because it has a completed action: the summons of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at the beginning of the play leads to their involvment in the Hamlet plot and finally leads to their deaths. Another difference is that in Waiting For Godot Vladimir and Estragon generate their own action of waiting (whether Godot will or will not come), whereas the two courtiers in Stoppard's play are trapped the Hamlet plot through what seems to them to be a supernatural agency. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are bewildered by fast-moving developments in the Hamlet pattern. They can not understand why these sudden and unforeseen changes have come to them. Whereas Beckett's two tramps represent the universal experience of waiting, Stoppard's two principals represent

the universal experience of feeling caught up by an incomprehensible force in an odd tragedy " where everyone who is marked for death dies." Rosencrantz and Guildenstern wonder what are they to do without adequate instructions in their blank context. Yet, their context is not blank; it is the script of Hamlet.Their destiny is Shakespeare's script,which has them led to death. They are not, as William Babula says, " escapees from Shakespeare's tragedy, but victims, as Hamlet is a victim, of the story line."[5]

In Shakespeare's Hamlet Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are a couple of characters so unimportant and marginal that they have been actually excluded from some productions of the play without any noticeable difficulty. But in Stoppard's version they are the pivot. In the story of these two minor characters in Hamlet, Stoppard saw a situation that could truly mirror the absurdity of human condition. Indeed, the absurdity of their story is already there in Shakespeare's text and Stoppard's achievement resides in foregrounding the absurdity of their story in his own play. It is significant that in the first published edition of the play (May 1967), the action, like that of Waiting For Godot, is circular; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern may be dead but there is

someone shouting and banging on a shutter, indistinctly calling two names. In rehearsals at the National Theatre, Stoppard cut this ending, and in subsequent editions, as in performance, Shakespeare has the last word.[6] Stoppard's return at the end of of the play to the final scene of Hamlet, which echoes his play's title, not only reminds us that the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern has been predetermined but implies that Stoppard has accepted Shakespeare's limitations so that Hamlet functions as a frame. When asked why, Stoppard answered that he had no other choice for this kind of drama: he considers Shakespeare's tragedy "probably the most famous play in any language; it is part of a sort of common mythology" ; and Rosencrantz and Guil-denstern " are so much more than merely bit players in another famous play...As far as their involvement in Shakespeare's text is concerned they are told very little about what is going on and much of what they are told isn't true. So I see them much more clearly as a couple of bewildered innocents rather than a couple of henchmen."[7]

From the beginning, then, Stoppard viewed Hamlet as

a means for solving practical problems of composition. The inevitability of the Hamlet plot is used by Stoppard as a device for denying choice in human affairs and, thus, asserting the major theme of his play, which is the absurdity of the human condition. Like Bond who initially thought of excluding the figure of Lear but later returned him to represent a minor theme dominated by another major antithetical statement in Lear, Stoppard returns the final scene of Hamlet to his play to serve his own purposes. Though the foundation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is Shakespeare's play, Stoppard reduces to absurdity everything noble and weighty in Hamlet. In Stoppard's version Hamlet becomes a slick conniver who drifts in and out adding to the general confusion, and the most significant exchanges and soliloquies in Shakespeare's play are eliminated and diluted with comedy or so drastically abridged that they are mere reminiscences of Shakespeare's passages. At the same time, the focus becomes the minor characters and incidents, and action that had taken place off-stage.

If Bond ignores the entire Gloucester sub-plot and goes

further to embed the thesis of the plot of King Lear into the first act of his play, Stoppard deliberately bases the dramatic structure of his play on the Hamlet pattern to reinforce his major theme. Ionesco, the representative spokesman for the principles of the absurd drama, has pointed out that " the conventional plot in its predictability and resolution is a reassuring distortion of life, whose primary law is unpredictability. A meaningful action, on the other hand, is one that captures and reflects on the absurd."[8]

Despite the apparent derivativeness recognised in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Stoppard can still be seen as the dominant interpreter of the new textual encounter. Perhaps, his thesis is not drastically antithetical to that of Shakespeare. Yet, the vision put forth by Stoppard is, I would argue, distinctly different from that of Shakespeare.

In Hamlet Shakespeare exploits all possible dramatic means to locate the character of Hamlet at the core of the play. Hamlet, thus, stands in the foreground of Shakespeare's text. All interpretations of Shakespeare's text, consequently, are

to revolve around the figure of Hamlet. Before Tom Stoppard, most, if not all the critics of Hamlet, had been concerned with the character of Hamlet, and even if they considered other elements in the play, they did so in relation to the protagonist. In his Ph.D. dissertation; Paul S. Conklin investigates the growth of Hamlet criticism from 1601 through the year 1821 and concludes that " It need hardly be said that the character of the hero is the point of major consideration," and " sooner or later all roads lead to this focal point."[9] Claude C. H. Williamson compiled all readings on the character of Hamlet from 1661 till 1947 from over one hundred sources to realize that " there is no single topic under the dramatic sun on which so many lances, quixotic and other, have been broken to no avail as Hamlet."[10] " To no avail," Williamson goes on, " because the windmills stand exactly where they stood in 1603, when Hamlet was born."[11]

Stoppard manages to break this pattern in his play through a brilliant inversion of Shakespeare's material. In the following chapter we will show how Stoppard establishes his own vision. We will examine the dramatic structure, characterization, and theat-

rical imagery of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead to identify the differences through which Stoppard sought to be the dominant interpreter of the new textual encounter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOREGROUNDING THE ABSURD

The story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern occupies a slight portion in the dramatic structure of Hamlet, and to place these two marginal characters in Shakespeare's text at the centre of his play Stoppard applies the same dramatic devices used by Shakespeare in Hamlet. The two dramatists manipulate the same tools for two different ends. In the first scene of Hamlet Shakespeare manages to create a mood of tension and suspense before we see Hamlet. The scene holds the interest of the audience by the air of mystery and expectancy, the eeriness of the hour and the reasonably quick entrance of the ghost. Hamlet is introduced by name when Bernardo, Francisco, Marcellus

and Horatio decide to " impart" what they have seen " unto young Hamlet."[1] Shakespeare skilfully links the supernatural element with his protagonist. The second scene brings Hamlet closer to our attention and sympathy. Now the setting changes from the tense apprehension under the open night sky of the first scene to the pomp and ceremony of the King's council chamber. In contrast to the nervous exchanges of the first scene here is the courtly worldliness of the new King's life within the castle. Before Claudius turns to Hamlet, Shakespeare presents the individuals and environment against which Hamlet's character is revealed. The general corruption of the court serves to accentuate Hamlet's integrity. The King's speech is self-revealing, and the number of figures of speech in which two opposing ideas are brought closely together - defeat (spoilt) and joy; mirth and death; dirge and marriage - may make his long formal speech sound impressive and fitting for a king but can not completely cover up his guilt:

> Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
> The imperial jointress of this warlike state,
> Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy -
> With one auspicious, and one dropping eye,

With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage
In equal scale weighing delight and dole
Taken to wife.[2]

To marry his sister-in-law so soon after his brother's death is a dubious thing, and by using these fine phrases he tries to make it sound more forthright than it really is. The rest of the scene informs us that his councillors supported him when he married Hamlet's mother. Indeed, from the very beginning of Shakespeare's play we are made to respond negatively to the King, Gertrude,and Polonius. Hamlet is thus placed at the centre of our sympathy and interest,and an overall look at the next eighteen scenes will demonstrate how he remains the focal point of the dramatic structure. On the other hand, when introducing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for the first time (Act II,ii.), Shakespeare significantly associates them with Claudius,to whom we have responded negatively. Their first scene clearly indicates that Shakespeare has given them " a group characterization."[3] The King's words " to use," " supply", and " profit" tell us that they exist merely as tools in the hands of the court, and their first words demonstrate this:-

Rosencrantz: Both your majesties

Might, by the sovereign power you have of us
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

Guildenstern: But we both obey
And here give up ourselves in the full bent
To be commanded.[4]

Rosencrantz's answer is hardly different from Guildenstern's, and the King and the Queen's words

Claudius: Thanks, Rosencrantz, and gentle Guildenstern.

Gertrude: Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.[5]

unmistakably establish their characters' note: they are submissive and indistinguishable. The fact that they have no identity and exist only as tools in the hands of Claudius and Gertrude, with whom we do not sympathise, makes us less sympathetic toward them. This explains why we tend to accept Hamlet's cruel words announcing their death (Act V,ii.).

In Stoppard's version the whole process is significantly reversed. Hamlet is excluded from the plot exposition, and the ghost, that making-strange element used by Shakespeare to direct our attention to Hamlet, is entirely dispensed with. The first characters we see when Stoppard's play opens are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Those given " group characterization" in Hamlet

are now given minute physical descriptions. They are " well-dressed, hats, cloaks, sticks and all." While each of them has " a large leather money bag," Guildenstern's bag is made " nearly empty" and Rosencrantz's " nearly full."[6] These physical details, however, do not embody any sense of individuality. We are told by the stage directions that " two Elizabethans" are " passing the time in a place without any visible character." Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are " betting the toss of a coin," and " they have apparently been doing this for some time." Rosencrantz, whose bag is nearly full," betrays no surprise at all," and Stoppard comments," he feels none- however he is nice enough to feel a little embarrassed at taking so much money off his friend- let that be his character note." Guildenstern, who is losing all the time "is not worried about the money." He is " aware but not going to panic about it." This, Stoppard comments again, is " his character note."[7] Examined carefully, the two characters are found to be the same indistinguishable submissive human beings we have seen in Hamlet, and Stoppard deliberately foregrounds dramatically, but farcically, those basic characteristics which Shakespeare has already given to them:

Rosencrantz: My name is Guildenstern, and this is Rosencrantz (Guil. confers briefly with him.) (without embarrasment.) I'm sorry - his name's Guildenstern, and I'm Rosencrantz.

Claudius : Welcome, dear Rosencrantz (he raises a hand at Guildenstern while Rosencrantz bows - Guildenstern bows late and hurriedly)..... (he raises a hand at Rosencrantz while Guildenstern bows to him - Rosencrantz is still straightening up from his previous bow and half way up he bows down again. With his head down, he twists to look at Guildenstern, who is on the way up.).... Thanks, Rosencrantz (turning to Rosencrantz who is caught unprepared, while Guildenstern bows) and gentle Guildenstern (turning to Guildenstern who is bent double).

Gertrude : (correcting) : Thanks Guildenstern (turning to Rosencrantz, who bows as Guildenstern checks upward movement to bow too - both bent double, squinting at each other)...and gentle Rosencrantz (turning to Guildenstern, both straightening up- Guildenstern checks again and bows again).[8]

Besides the comic effect these dramatic beats create, they also show us that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are still those same characters we have seen in Hamlet. Unlike Bond, who changes the relationship between Lear and Cordelia, Stoppard keeps the same pattern of relationships in Shakespeare's text to reinforce his major theme. Stoppard does not try to bring about a movement of discontinuity with his precursor but brings to the foreground of his version those characteristics of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Shakespeare's limitations are used by Stoppard in his play to show how and why the human condition is essentially and inescapably absurd. Though the story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is a fringe event in Hamlet, it is in itself a highly ironical and fundamentally dramatic situation, which Stoppard rewrites in three acts for a different end.

One aspect of Stoppard's novelty lies in his successful attempt to develop thoroughly " the play within the play" theme. It is significant that Stoppard brings on the troupe of players before Rosencrantz and Guildenstern meet any of the other characters from Shakespeare's play. In Hamlet, these players disappear immediately after Claudius' words " Give

me some light! Away!" (Act III,ii). But in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead these specialists in illusion exist in all three acts which constitute the dramatic structure, and are meaningfully connected with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In Act One Stoppard manages to establish swiftly but subtly the similarity between his major characters' situation and the condition of the players. Before they meet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern inform us that they have been spinning coins as long as they can remember. Vaguely uneasy and uncertain which of them is Rosencrantz and which Guildenstern, they know only that they have been summoned to court. When they try to remember, they can recall only that " there was a messenger" and " they were sent for." In spite of many details they still can remember they can not precisely define that message. Rosencrantz can remember that " pale sky before dawn" when " a man, standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters...called their names," and that " it was urgent - a matter of extreme urgency, a royal summons." He can recall those " lights in the stable-yard" and that he was fearful lest they " come too late." When Guidenstern asks him: " too late for what?" he answers: " How do I know ?" They are

like " a man breaking his journey between one place and another at a third place of no name, character, population or significance," and this is precisely the condition of the players. They are all " travelling" people:

Guil : Where from?
Player : Home.We're travelling people. We take our chances where we find them.
Guil. : It was chance, then?
Player : Chance?
Guil. : You found us.
Player : Oh yes.
Guil. : You were looking?
Player : Oh no.
Guil. : Chance, then.
Player : Or fate.
Guil. : Yours or ours?
Player : It could hardly be one without the other.[9]

Although the idea of employing different fictional levels may have its origin in the play within the play of Shakespeare's play, Stoppard manages to go further by connecting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players in a single world. Stoppard

allows his two major characters and the players to dominate the whole structure.

Through developing the relationship between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players, Stoppard not only obliterates all demarcation lines between different plays and worlds but attempts to unsettle his audience, compelling them to identify themselves with his tragi-comic protagonists. The complex irony derives from the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who boast, on stage, of their superiority as spectators of the disreputable actors, are, indeed, twice removed from the reality of the audience (actors impersonating characters in Stoppard's play who, in turn, are based upon two figures from Hamlet); yet they are also gradually shown as human beings becoming trapped in the circumstances in which they find themselves. The disreputable actors, on the other hand, " know which way the wind is blowing"[10] and can offer advice to the respectable courtiers, who are at a loss:

> Guil. : But for God's sake what are we supposed to do?
> Player: Relax. Respond. That's what people do. You can't go through life questioning your situation at every turn.

Guil. : But we don't know what's going on,or what to do with ourselves. We don't know how to act.

Player: Act natural...Everything has to be taken on trust:..One acts on assumptions.[11]

Throughout the play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not aware that, like the players, they are employed at the court of Elsinore, whereas the audience can clearly see how they constantly reveal their natures. When they meet the troupe of players for the first time, they insist on the distinct division into actors and spectators. Guildenstern says " I thought we were gentlemen."[12] Both are convinced of their own superiority over the low " rabble," and are shocked at the suggestion of taking part in a performance of The Rape of the Sabine Women. They adopt a patronizing attitude towards the players:

Guil. : Perhaps I can use my influence.

Player: At the tavern?

Guil. : At the court. I would say I have some influence.[13]

Although the Player treats Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as his prospective patrons, his critical remarks have made us aware

that they are not spectators only. In Act Two they desperately try to avoid becoming entangled in the action so as to maintain their positions as spectators, never realizing that actor and spectator are interchangeable roles, " two sides of the same coin," or " the side of two coins." Not only their words but also their mimetic scenes underscore this dramatic irony by showing them as actors. Just before the players rehearse The Murder of Gonzago, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern practise for their encounter with Hamlet (Guildenstern assuming the charac- of the prince) and perform the scene of their arrival in England, Rosencrantz playing the English King. Thus, they unconsciously assume the role of actor which they have resisted earlier.

The scene in which Guildenstern and Rosencrantz watch the rehearsal of the " mousetrap" is the most significant scene in the play. The Player's request, " Now if you two wouldn't mind just moving back..."[14] tellingly implies that spectators and actors have changed roles. While the disreputable players have established their superiority, Rosencratz and Guildenstern have become more and more insecure:

Player : I can come and go as I please.

Guil. : You're evidently a man who knows his way around.

Player : I've been here before.

Guil. : We're still finding our feet.

Player. : I should concentrate on not losing your heads.[15]

When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are face to face with their mirror-images (the two spies), they are still unwilling to recognise their own real selves:

Ros. : Well, if it isn't -! No, wait a minute, don't tell me-- it's a long time since- when was it? Ah, this is taking me back to- when was it? I know yours, that is. For a forget a face-- (he looks into the spy's face) not that I know you, that is. For a moment I thought - no, I don't know you, do I? Yes, I'm afraid you're quite wrong. You must have mistaken me for someone else.

[Guil., meanwhile has approached the other spy, brow creased in thought.]

Player : (to Guil.) Are you familiar with this play?

Guil. : No.[16]

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern insist on being spectators and, ironically, even their clapping at the performance foreshadows

their tragic fate. What blinds them to reality and makes them stumble helplessly towards their fate is this illusion about their own status, this discrepancy between what they think they are and what they really are - mere pawns in the hands of the court. Indeed, this is precisely where we can identify one basic difference between Stoppard and Shakespeare. In Hamlet, just before the play within the play starts, Shakespeare provides this scene:

> Hamlet: [to Polonius] My lord, you played once
> i' th' university, you say?
> Polonius: That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good
> actor.
> Hamlet: And what did you enact?
> Polonius: I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed
> i' th' Capitol; Brutus killed me.
> Hamlet : It was a brute part of him to kill so
> capital a calf there- Be the players ready.[17]

Like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Stoppard's play, Hamlet and Polonius in Shakespeare's play seem to miss the significance of their own words, which clearly anticipate the death of Polonius. Yet, while we can not recognise a real similarity between Polonius and Caesar, Stoppard uses all dramatic devices to

demonstrate how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the two spies, reality and illusion, real and acted life, rehearsal and performance, spectator and actor, are two sides of one and the same coin. In other words, if Shakespeare guides us to distinguish reality from illusion in Hamlet, Stoppard, through developing thoroughly the " play within the play within the play.." theme, compels us to realize that the demarcation line between reality and illusion is itself unreal. In contrast to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the players accept this paradox as a fact:

> Guil. : Well...aren't you going to change into your costume?
> Player: I never change out of it, sir.
> Guil. : Always in character.
> Player: That's it.[18]

The recognition of this paradox, however, must be, indeed, deeply disturbing to any perceptive audience. The mood of detachment in which we have been watching the childish games of Stoppard's protagonists in Act One gradually gives way to a feeling of unease in Act Two, and Stoppard's sophisticated use of mirror technique (the play within the play and other mimetic scenes) stills our anxiety about not only the freedom of Rosencrantz and Guil-

denstern but our own understanding of the relationship between illusion and reality. By the end of Act Two there are many hints that the remoteness from the actuality of death is about to be changed. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discuss their ability to conceive of their own deaths when they suggest that they can imagine themselves alive in a box or coffin. The third act opens in silence and in pitch darkness, which suggests the nothingness of death - a recurrent theme in the final act of Stoppard's play. In this act Stoppard introduces the sea travel theme to reinforce the play-life metaphor. Rosencrantz assumes the role of the English King while Guildenstern plays both himself and Rosencrantz. We move from one layer of unreality to another when they forget themselves and break the seal on Claudius' letter to find that it asks for Hamlet to be killed. At last, something depends on their choice. The appearance of control over their three destinies, however, is only illusory: Hamlet overhears their conversation and substitutes a letter asking for their deaths; but by then, significantly, they have realized that they would not have been strong enough to interfere with Claudius' plot:

....Let us keep things in proportion..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 this 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.[19]

Before the end of the play they discover the letter which Hamlet has forged asking for their deaths. The players who are in " the same boat with them" form a menacing circle around them, and Guildenstern, snatching a dagger from the Player's belt,talks angrily about the difference between the reality of death and the theatrical illusion of it:

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

Guil. : (fear, vengeance,scorn): Your experience?- Actors! ...I'm talking about death- and you've never experienced that. And you cannot act it. You die a thousand casual deaths...even as you die you know that you will come back in a different hat. But no one gets up after death-

there is no applause- there is only silence and some second hand clothes, and that's- death- (and he pushes the blade in up to hilt. The player stands with huge, terrible eyes, clutches at the wound as the blade withdraws: he makes small weeping sounds and falls to his knees.) [20]

Yet, this turns out to be a theatrical death. The Player has already told us that when one of his actors was condemned to death and he arranged for the sentence to be carried out during performance, the results were unconvincing. Even the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is represented theatrically through a conjuring trick: they disappear into the upstage darkness just before the dialogue switches back to the sequence from Hamlet. Guildenstern's last words " we'll know better next time," clearly shows that Stoppard is careful to be ambiguous about the reality of their death.

To differentiate between two worlds, that of his fore-grounded characters (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players) and that of all other characters, Stoppard employs a two-sided strategy. While all the other characters

are made to utter the same kind of language that Shakespeare has originally given to them, the foregrounded characters are given the English of today. If the poetic Elizabethan language makes Shakespeare's central characters seem to be moving purposefully towards a specific end, the language of the foregrounded characters shows them to be circumambulating. Language is one of Stoppard's means to bring home to us the absurdity of his central characters' world; the simplest statement or question can become amazing source of perplexity:

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?[21]

The imagery in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is basic to the concerns, form, and structure of the play. Coin tossing and the long run of " heads"

reveals an absurdist universe and foreshadows the unbreakable chain of events which will catch up Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the Hamlet pattern, leading to their deaths. The coin tossing in the opening scene defines the difference between the universe which Shakespeare's Hamlet and Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern struggle to understand. The image suggests a world in which all causality is absent, and presents us with the notion that the sequence of eighty-five heads is both surprising and unexpected:

> Guil. : It must be indicative of something besides the redistribution of wealth.(He muses.) 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 heads against himself in private atonement of unremembered past. (He spins a coin at Ros.)
>
> Ros. : Heads
>
> Guil. : Two: time has stopped dead, and the single experience of one coin being spun once has been repeated ninety times..(He flips a a coin, looks at it, tosses it to Ros.)

> On the whole, doubtful. Three: divine intervention, that is to say, a good turn from above concerning him...Four: a spectacular vindication of the principle that each individual coin spun individually (he spins one) is as likely to come down heads as tails and therefore should cause no surprise each individual time it does.[22]

The final explanation is statistically accurate and presents us with a world of total unreliability. The eighty-sixth spin is totally undetermined by the previous eighty-five. Facts remain isolated and all explanations remain equally possible since we can not comprehend the nature of circumstances determining the run. Guildenstern himself specifically draws the comparison between the two kinds of world:

> Guil. : The equanimity of your average tosser of coins depends upon the 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..[23]

The messenger summons them from the endless cycle of fortuitous repetitive facts to a world which proceeds in an ordained linear pattern towards a predetermined end. The summons and the coin tossing, both with each other and with the players, lead to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern being " caught up in " the Hamlet pattern.

If the intricate game of coin tossing in the first act introduces the influence of probability and chance over man's life, the box and the boat serve as appropriate metaphors which illustrate the limited control man has over his own fate. The box has boundaries,and the boat is merely a larger box whose movement on a particular course toward a specific destination has been

predetermined. While a passenger is free to move about, speak, think, he can not fundamentally alter the course the vessel must follow. Similarly, man follows a predetermined course starting from birth and moving invariably towards death. Stoppard uses the box and boat metaphors to show how man's ultimate mortality remains an immutable fact despite some sort of freedom to act during his span of travel. In Act Two Rosencrantz recognises man's mortality and clearly prefers existing within boundaries to not living at all:

> Ros. : ...(Guil. stirs restlessly, pulling his cloak round him.)..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, 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...[24]

Like Rosencrantz, who seems to enjoy the confines of the box, Guildenstern in Act Three enjoys the contained quality of the boat, which becomes a coffin image:

Guil. : Yes, I'm very fond of boats myself.
I like the way they're contained.
You don't have to worry about which
way to go, or whether to go at all -
the question doesn't arise, because
you're on a boat, aren't you?[25]

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's recognition of their destiny should, indeed, deeply alter the way in which we can respond to them because if they have to die, so do we and the entire thrust of Stoppard's strategy has been to make us recognise that, in our shadow world, the identity of man is defined only by his mortality.

To sum up: In Bloom's terms, Stoppard's vision may seem to be less original than that of Bond because Stoppard does not try to create a movement of discontinuity with Shakespeare through formulating a distinctive antithetical statement. Nevertheless, in the new textual encounter, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Stoppard manages to be the dominant interpreter. Through bringing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players

to the foreground of his play, and by thoroughly developing his sophisticated use of mirror technique (the play within the play and mimetic scenes), Stoppard established his own individual presence.

CONCLUSION

THERE WILL BE ALWAYS EAGLES

To formulate the theoretical perspective by which we can define the relationship between Bond and Stoppard's new versions and the Shakespearean originals, we have closely examined Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence in relation to those concepts of his precursors, W. Jackson Bate and T. S. Eliot. We have considered, modified, and reconstructed the differences within the theory of influence in order to adapt it to the needs of dramatic criticism.

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

In the new textual encounter, Lear, Bond's attempt to be the dominant interpreter is quite evident. The basic difference between Shakespeare's original and Bond's version consists of Bond's concern not only for the personal tragedy of the characters, but for the tragedy of a society that revels in moralized and institutionalized patterns of aggression. Bond believes that Shakespeare's design in King Lear produces a total arraignment of conventional authority and the morality used to explain and excute it. Bond's urge to reinforce his antithetical statement compels him to change

drastically the pattern of relationships in Shakespeare's play. Further, Bond ignores the entire Gloucester sub-plot and embeds the thesis of the main plot of King Lear in the dramatic structure of his own play. Bond's antithetical statement is intensified by the one-sided structure, the development of scenes, and the use of appropriate theatrical imagery.

Despite the apparent derivativeness recognized in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Stoppard could establish his own individual presence in the new textual encounter. According to the theoretical perspective of this study, Stoppard's version may be judged to be less original than that of Bond because Stoppard's play lacks a distinctive antithetical statement. In contrast to Bond, Stoppard does not alter the pattern of relationships in his precursor's text.

Nevertheless, through bringing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the players to the foreground of his play and by developing thoroughly his sophisticated use of mirror technique (the play within the play and mimetic scenes), Stoppard

could bring about a brilliant inversion of Shakespeare's material. In the story of the two marginal characters in Hamlet, Stoppard saw a situation that could truly mirror the absurdity of human condition. The inevitability of the Hamlet pattern is deliberately used by Stoppard as a device for denying choice in human affairs. Stoppard retains Shakespeare's terms only to assert his major theme which is the absurdity of human condition. Like Bond, Stoppard uses theatrical imagery which is basic to the concerns, forms, and the structure of the play.

Despite the differences between the two new versions, each playwright could set up a creative dialogue with the original, out of which comes a theatrical experience of impressive power. If Bate believes that there is nothing " approaching or analogous " to Shakespeare's originals, if Keats could not fulfill his hopes of writing fine plays and kept desperately wondering " why should we be owls..when we can be eagles," this research, through concretely defining the relationship between the new versions and the Shakespearean originals, has demonstrated that both Bond and Stoppard could

complete two plays which, I would argue, do not suffer by comparison with Shakespeare's great originals. Indeed, the two contemporary playwrights could prove that creating new versions analogous to their great originals is and will remain possible. There will be always eagles.

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