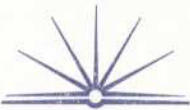
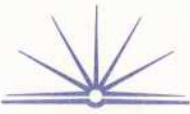


In the process of transformation of William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Tom Stoppard has used the earlier text to create a play with different values and ideas that stem from a different context, thus in the process, saying something new. Essentially, Stoppard in his at transformation Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (Ros. and Guild. are Dead) has used Hamlet as a 'springboard' to create his new play, with new ideas and values.

Hamlet, Shakespeare's transformation of the 12th century story of Saxo Grammaticus, wrote in the Elizabethan period. He wrote his play with a given intention to please the witty upper class and simultaneously the common folk/peasants. Thus, as a result, Shakespeare introduced into his play certain aspects which audiences appreciated. For example, humour, rhetoric and a blood bath at the end. At the same time, Shakespeare introduced values of truth, justice, equanimity/calmness of soul and writing.

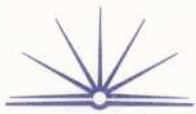


in the Protestant revolution, gave Hamlet a 'Protestant' conscience or mind. On the other hand, Stoppard's transformation of Hamlet, written in a different religious, social and historical context reflects different values, thus saying something new. Stoppard's most immediate context came from an agent, Kenneth Ewing, who suggested the idea to Stoppard, ~~to write a play that~~ "What if Hamlet should meet the mad King Lear at Dover?". At the same time, Stoppard, accustomed to the happenings at the London theatre, wrote a play to relate ~~to~~ to 'Theatre of the Absurd'. From this context, Stoppard derived the new values of confusion of memory, ^{direction} and action, as well as verbal humour (black humour) and the scene in a place with ^{of no} ~~no~~ visual significance. Finally, writing under the 20th century context of existentialism, Stoppard ~~set~~ took new values of 'man's quest for meaning in a meaningless universe' and man's alienation and confusion problem with freedom, and whether action is a way of overcoming the above. This,



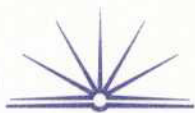
Stoppard has used the earlier text ~~to~~ as a 'springboard' to say something that is essentially new.

Stoppard's transformation of Hamlet ~~is~~ ~~is~~ essentially new as it presents different ideas or themes in relation to the individual questioning his/her role and significance in life and the individual questioning direction. In Hamlet, Hamlet is plunged into a ~~man~~ and ambiguous situation (his father has died, mother remarried etc...). Hamlet's moral values of truth, ^{and} justice ~~etc.~~ can't be called upon. However, Hamlet's confusion of action is repressed as the Ghost analogically gives Hamlet 'the script', and tells him "Howsoever thou pursues this act...". In addition, Hamlet's constant questioning of ~~the~~ ~~how~~ ~~the~~ individual ~~sets~~ should act ~~etc.~~ the 'human condition' and what it means to be a man is emphasised. His ^{moral} confusion of what ~~is~~ is morally ~~not~~ right or wrong is ~~em~~ punctuated by his constant emotional outbursts. For example, in Act III "What a piece of

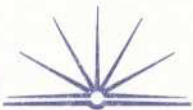


work is man". ~~On~~ On the other hand, in Stoppard's Ros. and Cui. are Dead, the protagonists Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, similarly plunged into a new situation of "a place without any visual significance" are analogically not given 'the script'. ~~and~~ their analogical director Claudius gives them no help either. The only ~~see~~ thing Ros. and Cui. are certain of is that "we were sent for". Their confusion about what is morally right or wrong is ~~illustrated~~ illustrated by their complete ignorance of whether there is a God (and/or) and the values of having no values. ~~Their~~ confusion of action and direction is punctuated in many occasions by Cui. by his outcry's of "For God's sake we don't know how to act" and "which way did we come in?". In summary, Stoppard's transformation has used minor characters in Hamlet to create a new text with different ideas relating to the individual questioning direction and their role in life.

~~Tom~~ Tom Stoppard has used the ideas of the individual

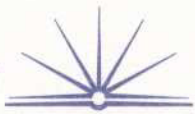


questioning fate, and freedom and action in contrast to passivity/reflection to say something new. In Hamlet, the protagonist or hero, questions fate constantly. Eventually he realises that he is a minister of God, a servant of God when he says in Act V, scene 1 "There is special providence in the form of a sparrow. If death be not now, 'tis to come...". With this reference and other references in Act IV and V Hamlet realises that his fate or destiny is in God's ~~the~~ hands. In Hamlet, the freedom given to Hamlet in how to act ~~to~~ and think leads to morally inspiring questions. ~~The~~ Hamlet's constant conflict over how to act ~~to~~ and not reflect is portrayed in the play, in particular in his rage in Act 2, scene 2 when in his "Oh what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy Hamlet shouts "I must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words". On the other hand, Stoppard's main characters have different/new ideas relating to fate, freedom and ~~where~~ whether to act or reflect. In the transformation, Ros. and Civil. attitude towards fate



is summed up in ~~the~~ civil. century "~~the more~~ We have lost our momentum, and move idly towards eternity without possible hope of explanation..." Ros. and Civil. believe they ~~are destined to~~ fate is not ~~important~~ determined by God as there is 'no God' or 'audience'. In Ros. and Civil. are Dead, Ros. and Civil. freedom is not a gift nor blessing, rather a curse. Their freedom makes more opportunity for mistakes, in many only turn out life. Finally, with regards to whether to act or reflect, Ros. and Civil.'s choice is decided, as the protagonists are denied any non-trivial action from the beginning, and even Civil. 'killing' of the player becomes trivial.

Finally, Stoppard's transformation says something new through the different/new concept of tragedy present in each, as well as the new theatre and language conventions in ~~and~~ his transformation. These are the ways in which Stoppard, the composer of the contemporary text, has said something.



new. Thus, Stoppard's play is more than just a pawn's view of a chessboard.