

# Godot Comes: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

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IN THE decade after the first productions of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, critics frequently remarked on the similarities between it and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.<sup>1</sup> Strong similarities exist, chiefly in characterization, but Stoppard's two courtiers encounter a predicament and represent an experience essentially different from those of Beckett's two tramps. While Beckett's characters face interminable waiting, Stoppard's face sudden and inexplicable change. One of the most important distinctions is that in Stoppard's play Godot (as interpreted by various of Beckett's critics) comes.

Critics have seen the lives of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as paralleling those of Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon. Robert Brustein observed that like Beckett's two tramps, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "alternate between vaudeville routines and ruminations on the vacancy of life in general and theirs in particular."<sup>2</sup> From the beginning of the play "their fate of waiting" for something — anything — to happen is established, wrote C. J. Gianakaris, and "as with *Waiting for Godot*, limitless biding of time constitutes a horizontal axis of the play."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, John Russell Taylor wrote that as soon as we meet the principals "we know (primed with Beckett and all that crush) that Godot will never come, nothing will ever change, the two will remain perforce waiting in the wings for the rest of their lives."<sup>4</sup> C. W. E. Bigsby characterizes the play as "a kind of *Waiting for Godot* in which Vladimir and Estragon have become university wits" who follow Beckett's characters in playing Wittgensteinian games, seeking security in conversation, and reaching out to one another.<sup>5</sup> Recently, Kenneth Tynan has observed that "the sight of

two bewildered men playing pointless games in a theatrical void while the real action unfolds off stage inevitably recalls Beckett."<sup>6</sup>

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* seems to show some strong influence from *Waiting for Godot*. Both plays present two little men, lacking knowledge and power, who are trying to grapple with a universe full of uncertainty. Similarities in characterization and in the relationships between the two main characters in each play are particularly striking. Guildenstern resembles Vladimir, or Didi, who is more head, while Rosencrantz resembles Estragon, or Gogo, who is more body. Didi experiences anguish in waiting for Godot and tells Gogo that he perceives things which his friend misses (p. 38); Guildenstern shows great strain and fear at the long run of "heads" at the beginning of the play, does most of the philosophizing, and is much more mentally alert than Rosencrantz. Gogo is concerned with food, his feet, erections, and sleep; he has been a poet, has dreams, but forgets about Godot. Rosencrantz is indifferent to the run of "heads," but is aroused by the players' suggested pornographic exhibition (p. 28); he is the first to voice an intuition of his own and Guildenstern's approaching deaths (pp. 37-38) and later the first to voice acceptance (p. 25). A very poor memory is characteristic of both Gogo (pp. 9, 10, 31, 34, 45, 50) and Rosencrantz (pp. 15, 16, 40, 70, 107, 125). Didi and Guildenstern are the dominant members of these duos. Both Gogo and Rosencrantz frequently want to leave, but Didi and Guildenstern think they should remain, waiting for Godot or waiting on the King. Gogo has difficulty in understanding how to play at Pozzo and Lucky (p. 47), and Rosencrantz has even more difficulty in understanding how to play at questioning Hamlet (pp. 46-48). The scenes in which Guildenstern plays the "nursemaid" to Rosencrantz (pp. 38, 104) are reminiscent of the way Didi comforts and sings to Gogo (pp. 37-38, 45), and Rosencrantz's plea to Guildenstern, "Don't leave me!" when the Player steps on his hand (p. 76) seems an echo of Gogo's "Stay with me!" after he has been beaten (p. 37). Didi can become irritated at Gogo's uncertainty and "whining" (pp. 10, 46), while Guildenstern becomes increasingly angry about Rosencrantz's lack of perception and initiative and finally "smashes him down" (p. 121). Stop-

pard has departed from *Hamlet*, where the two friends are virtually indistinguishable, to follow the dominant patterns of the characterization of the principals in *Waiting for Godot*.

Because Stoppard seems to be following Beckett very closely in some aspects of his play, the differences between *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Waiting for Godot* are particularly important. If Stoppard consciously depended on Beckett and expected his audience to be aware of the dependence, he was also presenting thought, action, and a theatrical experience distinctively different from that in *Waiting for Godot*. "Nothing to be done," "Nothing ever happens" are the cries of Didi and Gogo, but in Stoppard's play a great deal happens very rapidly. Time hangs very heavy for the two modern tramps, but the two courtiers seldom refer to the passage of time, think time may be an illusion (pp. 16, 17), and at times find "Never a moment's peace!" (p. 73). They do resort to games to pass the time and avoid facing their own predicament; however, they are at the same time trapped in the fast-moving, eventful *Hamlet* plot and are becoming increasingly anxious about their entrapment. Didi and Gogo are concerned about guilt and salvation, but make no assured contact with anything beyond themselves. Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are concerned chiefly with freedom of action and are amazed that the "they" who had it in for them found them so important (p. 122). Beckett's play, in short, is about the uncertainty and frustration felt by Didi and Gogo in their interminable waiting in limitless time. Stoppard's is about the uncertainty felt by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in trying to understand the origin and meaning of events which they come to realize are carrying them to their deaths.

If Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have existed in boredom and waiting up to the time of the summons, as the play suggests, with the summons their lives are transformed. The summons, the impossible run of "heads" in the coin tossing, their being "caught up" with the players, the entrapment in the action of *Hamlet*, and the deaths — all are intricately intermeshed and are part of a pattern which they enter, or which encloses them, at the time of the summons. Didi and sometimes Gogo remember fragments

of a long lost past: the Eiffel Tower, Gogo's attempted suicide while harvesting grapes on the Rhone, the Maçon country (pp. 7, 35, 39-40). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern refer to no recollections from the time before the summons, and Rosencrantz cannot even remember the first thing he can remember (p. 16). But they remember clearly the summons and the ensuing events. In fact, they refer to it eight times in the course of the play, frequently with vivid detail (pp. 17-20, 39, 51, 111, 125). Though the two courtiers were sent for in *Hamlet*, the details of the summons are Stoppard's. Their names were called and they were awakened in the dawn — to a new kind of life. They are "practically starting from scratch" (p. 20) "with an extra slice of childhood when you least expect it" (p. 40). In *Waiting for Godot* the boy messengers address Vladimir as Mr. Albert, and it is uncertain if they are really from Godot and if they carry the two tramps' messages correctly, but in any case the messages result only in continued waiting (pp. 32-34, 58-59). However, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* the messenger calls the names of the two courtiers and delivers the "royal summons." It results in their galloping off "headlong and hotfoot across the land, our guides outstripped in the breakneck pursuit of our duty. Fearful lest we come too late!" (p. 19). Amidst the uncertainties of Elsinore, Guildenstern observes, "That much is certain — we came" (p. 39).

The summons functions much as a leitmotif in the play and becomes associated with the run of "heads," the *Hamlet* pattern represented by the Tragedians, and the deaths of the principals. These elements are brought together and their interrelationships suggested in two key passages. In the first passage, Guildenstern makes the second reference to the summons in his speculation about the impossible run of "heads":

The sun came up about as often as it went down, in the long run, and a coin showed heads about as often as it showed tails. Then a messenger arrived. We had been sent for. Nothing else happened. Ninety-two coins spun consecutively have come down heads ninety-two consecutive times . . . and for the last three minutes on the wind of a windless day I have heard the sound of drums and flute . . . (p. 18).

The music heralds the Tragedians, the first characters from the entrapping *Hamlet* plot whom Rosencrantz and Guildenstern meet, and the plot of course includes the players' production which results in the two being sent to England and their deaths. Rosencrantz's next remark to Guildenstern, that the fingernails and beard grow after death — the first reference to death — is only seemingly a *non sequitur*.

A second key passage occurs a few minutes later :

GUIL: Practically starting from scratch . . . An awakening, a man standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters, our names shouted in a certain dawn, a message, a summons . . . A new record for heads and tails. We have not been picked out . . . simply to be abandoned . . . set loose to find our own way . . . We are entitled to some direction . . . I would have thought.

ROS: (alert, listening) I say ———! I say ———

GUIL: Yes?

ROS: I heard — I thought I heard — music. (p. 20)

Guildenstern's comment about lack of direction has been cited to show the loneliness and frustration of absurd man.<sup>7</sup> And indeed the two characters are generally lonely and frustrated. But the words are ironic in their dramatic context, for their lives will not be without direction. The music announces the players and the dramatic pattern represented by the players in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern will be "caught up" and swept along.<sup>8</sup> They will be directed to England and their deaths. The "direction" which they receive includes the meaning of the direction of actors in a play. As the play progresses, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are more bewildered by the direction which they are receiving than by the lack of it. A similar linking between the summons and the music of the players occurs at the court (p. 51); and on the boat, just as Rosencrantz complains of lack of help, the sound of a recorder announces the Tragedians (p. 112).

The coin tossing not only provides a protracted opening scene, but is referred to frequently in the play, and extends into the first meeting with the Tragedians. The fantastic run of "heads" involves the problem of chance, freedom, and determinacy, which

is central to Stoppard's examination of the lives of these two minor characters from *Hamlet*. Critics have given relatively brief but diversified interpretations of the coin tossing and its relation to the play as a whole. Andrew Kennedy said that the run of "heads" pointed to an "infinite series";<sup>9</sup> Gianakaris, that it established the two courtiers' fate of waiting;<sup>10</sup> and Taylor, that it meant that Godot would never come, that nothing would ever change, and the two would continue waiting.<sup>11</sup> Julian Gitzen perceives that "although the law of probability simply had been suspended arbitrarily by the author, this comic situation does call attention to the vital issue of the reliability of natural laws," upon which all control depends.<sup>12</sup> Helene Keyssar-Franke concludes that an audience watching the coin tossing would feel curious and baffled, but also "increasingly ready to accept that the world on stage is not like any world we know, and that in this world, 'almost anything can happen next,' as Rosencrantz will assert at the end of Act II."<sup>13</sup> The coin tossing does tell us something about the fate of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. It does not seem to predict monotony or continued waiting; rather, as some of these critics indicated, it marks a change.

When the play opens, Rosencrantz announces after a few on-stage tosses that the score is seventy-six-love (p. 11). The game is continued with the players and the final string of "heads" comes to one hundred (p. 30). This is a change from their past experience. Guildenstern observes "with tight hysteria": "We have been spinning coins together since I don't know when, and in all that time (if it *is* all that time) I don't suppose that either of us was more than a couple of gold pieces up or down" (p. 17-18). This has happened only after the summons, indeed on the same day as the summons, and has been continued into the meeting with the players, who introduce the controlling *Hamlet* plot. The series is not infinite, since "tails" finally comes up (p. 34).

Guildenstern observes that the "fortuitous and the ordained" formed "a reassuring union which we recognized as nature . . . Then a messenger arrived" (p. 18). The coin tossing marks the two courtiers' apparent departure from what they and the audience have regarded as the normal realm of law, chance, and nature and their entry into a realm where happenings seem both

capricious and deterministic. The long run of "heads" is a kind of epiphany, revealing an absurdist universe and foreshadowing the unbreakable chain of events in the *Hamlet* pattern which will catch up Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and sweep them along to their deaths. The events which will entangle them are as different from their previous eventless existence as this coin tossing is from earlier games. The ambiguous "they," who Rosencrantz and Guildenstern feel "had it in" for them from the beginning (p. 122), becomes a personification for the order or disorder that causes or permits coins or courtiers to become fixed in unexpected patterns. More fundamental than the seemingly "natural" laws of mathematical probability is the law that all the world's actor-spectators have no real control. While "almost anything can happen," all are caught in whatever happens in the same way. The coin tossing also provides an image of life as a game in which one may lose suddenly and inexplicably; tossing or choosing coins, "questions," or entering a plot one did not write, far from being monotonous, may be filled with terrifying implications. This opening scene is parodied as Rosencrantz presents both fists empty several times (p. 61) and then holds a coin in both fists so that Guildenstern, again anxious, chooses the "correct" fist six consecutive times (pp. 102-03). Rosencrantz may be a parody of the absurdist god revealed in the run of "heads," but it is also implied that the absurdist god may be like him. The difference between this deity and Hamlet's "divinity that shapes our ends" (V.ii.10) defines the difference between the universe which Shakespeare's Hamlet and Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seek to understand.

The summons and the coin tossing, both with each other and with the Tragedians, lead to the two courtiers being "caught up in" the *Hamlet* pattern. William Babula has pointed out that for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "destiny lies in the plot of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy," and that the play becomes a metaphor for life.<sup>14</sup> Formerly nonentities who do not recall anything about their previous existence, they gain their only memorable experience and their only identity through their involvement in the events of *Hamlet*. The players appropriately represent the entrapment which makes them participants in a play they did

not write. The Tragedians include sex shows in their repertory and tell Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that "it costs little more if you happens to get caught up in the action" (p. 23). Guildenstern understands the implications before Rosencrantz and asks further about being "caught up" and the players prepare to catch them up (p. 26). The figure suggests the ambiguous relationship between control and consent and between player and spectator as well as the tenuous distinction between being "caught up" and "caught." Later, in the midst of their efforts to "glean" from Hamlet, Guildenstern says, "We've been caught up. Your smallest action sets off another somewhere else and is set off by it" (p. 39). When they are practicing the questioning of Hamlet, Guildenstern tells Rosencrantz to "catch me unawares" (p. 45). Also the players who are catching them up in the action are catching up with them in the journey (p. 62). Finally, in a speech that anticipates the conclusion of the pattern in which they are caught, Guildenstern tells the Player that he doesn't "catch them [the spectators] unawares and start the whisper in their skull that says — 'One day you are going to die.'" The Player maintains that he does (p. 83). Three times the entrapment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the play — or the play as life — is revealed by the players. As the Tragedians enter for their fateful performance before the King, Rosencrantz "breaks for the oposite wing" only to encounter two more approaching Tragedians (p. 76). Immediately after the two courtiers have discovered the letter ordering their deaths, "the players emerge, impossibly, from the barrel, and form a casually menacing circle round ROS and GUIL" (p. 122). Desperately, Guildenstern tries to kill the Player, but discovers that his "death" was just a competent job of acting (p. 123).

While at court and on the ship, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, like Didi and Gogo, experience uncertainty and frustration. Beckett's characters, particularly Didi, are uncertain about what Godot is like, whether he will come, and whether the boys will carry the messages; Stoppard's characters, particularly Guildenstern, are uncertain about the King's motives and intentions, their assignment from the King, their own safety, and death. The principal characters in both plays are frustrated because of lack



of success. But Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not bored and are not existing in a void of endless time and space. They are primarily concerned with escaping from the *Hamlet* pattern in which they have been "caught up." So much is happening that Rosencrantz repeatedly wants to go home (pp. 37-40, 73, 75-76, 95). Guildenstern thinks that they will come through "all right" if they "tread warily" and "follow instructions," but that being "arbitrary" might cause a "shambles," and "If we go there's no knowing" (pp. 39-40, 60, 95). They are blocked in time by an unbroken series of fast-moving events and in space by other characters. They have some time between *Hamlet* scenes to practice how to act with Hamlet (who always comes), but they are imprisoned within the *Hamlet* plot and within twenty-four hours arrive at Elsinore, receive instructions, try to "glean" from Hamlet, witness the play (including the foreshadowing of their own deaths) and the King's agitation, become involved in the slaying of Polonius, the arrest of Hamlet, and are sent off to England with Hamlet. Only for a "fractional moment" (e.g., p. 92) is there a possible escape from this pattern. Along with the confrontations with the Tragedians, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern feel trapped by other characters: "In and out, on and off, they're coming at us from all sides" (p. 73), and "As soon as we make a move they'll come pouring in from all sides . . ." (p. 85). They vaguely hope for not just anything to happen, but for something that would bring an explanation or release. Ironically (very much as when the Tragedians' music is first heard, p. 20), Guildenstern thinks the sound of a pipe aboard the ship "could change the course of events" (p. 112), but the music again heralds the players, who personify the ineluctable pattern of events.

Two young courtiers, then, have been suddenly awakened by a summons from uneventful and directionless lives, coins turn up "heads" one hundred consecutive times in an absurdist epiphany, and the courtiers become part of a pattern of events — whose cause or purpose they do not understand — which they cannot or will not escape and which both gives them their only identity and carries them to their deaths. In this sense Godot comes in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Critics have given numerous interpretations to Beckett's Godot. In one sense, Godot by defi-

dition can never come. Ruby Cohn has described Godot as "the promise that is always awaited and never fulfilled"<sup>15</sup> and David H. Hesla as "simply Time Future" which is no longer Godot when it passes the barrier into time present.<sup>16</sup> But in another sense, time future, what we have waited for, knowingly or unknowingly, becomes time present, as Guildenstern remarks at Elsinore: "One is, after all, having it [the future] all the time . . . now . . . now . . . and now . . ." (p. 70). Esslin has said that "Godot simply represents the objective of our waiting — an event, or thing, a person, death," or "the intervention of a supernatural agency."<sup>17</sup> Other critics have seen Godot as "the anthropomorphic image of God,"<sup>18</sup> a little god, love, or death.<sup>19</sup> In some of these forms Godot comes to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They experience a "future" very different from their past; however, most importantly, they experience approaching death and apparent supernatural intervention.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have seemingly been waiting in the wings before assuming their roles and being "caught up in" the *Hamlet* pattern, which leads to their deaths and suggests to them the intervention of some supernatural agency. Hesla has said that if the question of Godot's meaning "is put in its ancient gnostic form or modern existentialist form — the form that holds that the sin man must repent is, in Gogo's words, 'Our being born,' — then Godot is simply Death or Nonbeing,"<sup>20</sup> and Esslin has observed that suicide is the favourite solution sought by Didi and Gogo.<sup>21</sup> Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are increasingly preoccupied by death. Not only the title of the play, but the philosophical musings on death as not-being, the word play on "death," the obsession of the Tragedians with slaying and dying, the dumbshow presenting the death of the two spies — all point to the "dead stop" which Rosencrantz intuitively perceives when first arriving at Elsinore (p. 38). In his last words he has "had enough" and is "relieved" (p. 125). As in the dumbshow "the SPIES die at some length, rather well" (p. 84), so presumably do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern — probably better than they have done anything else. They gain identity as humans and as individuals in accepting the inevitability of their own approaching deaths, indeed in knowingly delivering their own death war-

rants. Keyssar-Franke shows that Stoppard has skillfully manipulated the responses of his audience to bring them unawares to realize that they are actor-spectators like the two courtiers and that their deaths too are inescapable.<sup>22</sup> In some ways *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a modern *Everyman* in which the principals do not know why they answered the summons and where it is leading them.

After the summons, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, particularly the latter, feel that they are experiencing an un-, sub-, or supernatural force. In Act I Guildenstern feels afraid because the run of "heads" seems to mean the end of a natural order and the presence of a deity or force that permits or causes the fantastic to become inescapable. Guildenstern, "desperate to lose," experiences the same fear when he chooses the fist with the coin six consecutive times — only to learn that Rosencrantz had a coin in both fists (p. 103). On the ship Guildenstern feels that they are caught in an incredible chain of events: "And it *has* all happened. Hasn't it?" (p. 108). The two feel more and more that their fate is determined. Guildenstern expresses it best: "Where we went wrong was getting on a boat. We can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current . . ." (p. 122).<sup>23</sup> Also, more and more they see the forces controlling them as personified and hostile. They see themselves as intended victims but also as gaining importance. Their lives, they feel, are being directed and ended by an unseen "they" which sometimes suggests the King and the court, but which increasingly means some un-, sub-, or supernatural agency: "They don't care," says Rosencrantz (p. 71). Again, jumping overboard "would put a spoke in their wheel," Rosencrantz says. "Unless they're counting on it," Guildenstern replies (p. 108). Assume, Guildenstern remarks later, "that they're going to kill him": (i.e., Hamlet) (p. 110). As they near the coast of England, Rosencrantz sums up the courtiers' perception of "they": "They had it in for us, didn't they? Right from the beginning. Who'd have thought that we were so important?" (p. 122). Ironically, Rosencrantz says, "They'll just have to wait," before he disappears at the end (p. 125). Though this agency does not appear in person,

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are convinced that "they" have seized control of their lives and swept them to their deaths. They do not feel, like Didi and Gogo, that they have been abandoned, but that they are receiving a disproportionate amount of attention.

In keeping with the different fates of the principals in relation to their Godots in *Waiting for Godot* and in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, the two plays differ structurally in at least two important respects. The structure of *Waiting for Godot* reflects the process of waiting and is basically circular and repetitive. Cohn has pointed out that the dialogue and stage directions of the first act of *Waiting for Godot* indicate that Didi and Gogo are doing what they have often done before,<sup>24</sup> and critics have generally recognized that the play's two acts suggest a repeated rather than a completed action and that the second act does largely repeat the first. On the contrary, the first act of Stoppard's play is concerned with sudden change, and the play presents a completed action within a structure that is basically linear. The summons leads to the involvement in the *Hamlet* plot, which leads to the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Another structural difference is that in *Waiting for Godot* the two tramps generate their own action of waiting (whether Godot can or cannot come), whereas in Stoppard's play the two courtiers are trapped in the *Hamlet* plot through what seems to them to be a supernatural agency. Rolf Breuer has explained "that the two tramps' behavior generates its own goal" and that the first act gives birth to the second,<sup>25</sup> while Eugene Webb has described Beckett's play as "the story of two vagabonds who impose on their slovenly wilderness an illusory, but desperately defended pattern: waiting."<sup>26</sup> In Stoppard's play the two central characters are unable to escape from the pre-existing *Hamlet* pattern.

If we compare *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* with *Waiting for Godot*, we see in Stoppard's play two characters strikingly similar to Didi and Gogo who find themselves in a predicament essentially different from that in *Waiting for Godot*. Didi and Gogo, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are all representatives of humanity, and feel uncertain, frustrated, and powerless to change their situation. Didi and Gogo are desperate, but always

wait for some resolution and explanation tomorrow. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are bewildered by fast-moving developments — the *Hamlet* pattern, the revelation of the “they” who had it in for them, and their approaching deaths. From the run of “heads” to their plaintive wondering at the end if they had done anything wrong (p. 125), they cannot understand why these sudden and unforeseen changes have come to them. Whereas Didi and Gogo represent the universal experience of waiting, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern represent the universal experience of feeling caught up by an incomprehensible force in a bizarre tragedy, written by an unknown author, “where everyone who is marked for death dies” (p. 79).

## NOTES

- 1 References will be to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) and *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954).
- 2 “Waiting for Hamlet,” *The New Republic*, 157 (4 Nov. 1967), 25.
- 3 “Absurdism Altered: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*,” *Drama Survey*, 7 (Winter 1968-1969), 53.
- 4 *The Second Wave: British Drama of the Seventies* (London: Methuen and Co., 1971), p. 100.
- 5 *Tom Stoppard* (London: Longman Group, 1976), pp. 11, 16.
- 6 “Profiles: Withdrawing in Style from the Chaos,” *The New Yorker*, 19 Dec. 1977, p. 72.
- 7 Gianakaris, for example, says these are “archetypal words for all those caught in the modern universal dilemma” (p. 55).
- 8 Helene Keyssar-Franke has asked if the music is “a tongue-in-cheek reference to the birth of tragedy out of the spirit of music.” “The Strategy of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*,” *Educational Theatre Journal*, 27 (Mar. 1975), 93. This is possible, but in the context of the play the music, faint and unreal at first, appropriately announces the Tragedians and the *Hamlet* pattern which at first seems so strange and remote to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
- 9 “Old and New in London Now,” *Modern Drama*, 11 (Feb. 1969), 440.
- 10 Gianakaris, p. 53.
- 11 Taylor, p. 100.
- 12 “Tom Stoppard: Chaos in Perspective,” *Southern Humanities Review*, 10 (1976), 149.
- 13 Keyssar-Franke, p. 88.
- 14 “The Play-Life Metaphor in Shakespeare and Stoppard,” *Modern Drama*, 15 (Dec. 1972), 279.
- 15 *Back to Beckett* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 132.

- 16 *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 134.
- 17 *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 29.
- 18 "They Also Serve," *Times Literary Supplement*, 55 (10 Feb. 1956), 84.
- 19 Cohn, pp. 131-32, and Hesla, p. 134.
- 20 Hesla, p. 134.
- 21 Esslin, p. 36.
- 22 Keyssar-Franke, pp. 85-97.
- 23 Hamlet's lines about the "divinity that shapes our ends" (V.ii.10-11) are spoken specifically in connection with his discovering and changing the letter borne by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The "they" to whom they attribute their fate appears as a modern interpretation of — or response to — Hamlet's "divinity."
- 24 Cohn, p. 132.
- 25 "The Solution as Problem: Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*," *Modern Drama*, 19 (Nov. 1976), 231.
- 26 *The Plays of Samuel Beckett* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 26.