

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in the previous chapters, I would like to draw some conclusions. Both of the plays are absurd plays. Since absurd play is highly influenced by the philosophy of existentialism, that is why the major characters in both plays are characters who are trying to figure out the meaning of their lives.

Vladimir and Estragon, the major characters in *Waiting for Godot*, are two tramps who are waiting for a man who is a mysterious figure named Godot. They believe Godot will save them from their meaningless life. Vladimir and Estragon are intended to represent humanity in general, which explains why they have different traits because every human being has their own traits. Vladimir is portrayed as a person who is intelligent, responsible, persistent, and hopeful. He is capable of thinking, has knowledge about philosophical and religious matters, is reliable, and believes Godot will come someday and save him and Estragon, which is why he keeps on waiting. Vladimir is the reason both of the major characters wait for Godot, since he believes so much in Godot. He also makes

Estragon waits for Godot with him. On the other hand, Estragon is portrayed as a person who is shallow, helpless, absent-minded, and impatient. Estragon is incapable of thinking, of recalling the events that happened in the past, of taking care of himself, and does not like to wait and do nothing. Estragon keeps forgetting about Godot and keeps suggesting that both he and Vladimir leave, because he is uncertain whether Godot will actually come and he thinks it is better for him and Vladimir to take action on their own. However, he is always reminded by Vladimir about Godot, to prevent him from leaving. Thus, it is clear that the purpose of the author in creating characters like Vladimir and Estragon is to represent humanity, namely, people who passively wait for other people to give meaning of their life.

Guilkenstern and Rosencrantz, the major characters in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, are two Elizabethan men who are sent by the King of Denmark to watch over Hamlet. As characters who are caught up in the plot of *Hamlet*, Guilkenstern and Rosencrantz struggle to figure out the meaning of their life in the story. They believe that by participating in the event, they will have the answer about their existence. Guilkenstern and Rosencrantz are also intended to represent humanity in general, which explains their different traits. Guilkenstern is portrayed as a person who is inquisitive, anxious, and rational. He is very interested in figuring out the reason why everything is the way it is in order to understand situations around him, which is why he questions things a lot. He believes that there is a reason or logical explanation for all events that happen. This is why he is the one who suggests that both he and Estragon carry out their duty, so that they can figure out their purpose. He becomes worried when things do not go according to the plan or when he cannot take control of a situation, and it is hard for him to act without knowing. Rosencrantz, on the other hand, is

portrayed as a person who is simple-minded, carefree, and indecisive. Rosencrantz does not share the same concern as Guildenstern about their existence and he is not bothered about thinking deeply regarding their situation, as long as he is happy. He also cannot make a decision on his own, which is why he lets Guildenstern decide and he supports whatever decision Guildenstern makes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the purpose of the author in creating characters like Guildenstern and Rosencrantz is to represent humanity, namely, people who actively look for the meaning of their life by themselves.

As mentioned previously, the major characters in each play are intended to represent humanity in general. Humans are social beings; they cannot exist without the presence of other people. That explains why Beckett and Stoppard make their characters in pairs; it is to give the sense of being needed and the sense of existence for each of their characters. It also explains that despite their different personalities and being somewhat opposite to each other in certain ways, the major characters in each play depend on and complement each other, which is why they should be seen as one entity. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir needs Estragon to talk to and take care of in order to pass time, while Estragon needs Vladimir to protect and watch over him. In *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Guildenstern needs Rosencrantz for company and support, while Rosencrantz needs Guildenstern for guidance. However, there is one character who leads his companion to do something and there is one who relies on the other more. In this case, Vladimir and Guildenstern are the ones who lead their companion, which makes them the dominant one of the two. Vladimir is the one who leads Estragon to wait for Godot: despite Estragon's suggestion to leave, in the end Estragon stays with Vladimir to wait for Godot because he needs him more. It is the same with Guildenstern and Rosencrantz. Guildenstern is the one

who leads Rosencrantz to carry out their duty: even though Rosencrantz does not share the same concern as Guildenstern about their existence, in the end Rosencrantz follows Guildenstern's step because he cannot make a decision on his own.

Waiting for Godot and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* apparently share some similarities and a difference. The first similarity is both of them are absurd plays which deal with the theme of existentialism, as the major characters in the two plays are caught up in a meaningless world and they struggle to figure out the meaning of their lives. The second similarity is the major characters in each play have different traits because they are intended to represent humanity in general; however, in the end they decide to do the same thing. Vladimir and Estragon decide to wait for Godot, while Guildenstern and Rosencrantz decide to carry out the King's order. Another similarity is at the end of the plays, when both major characters fail to discover the meaning of their lives. Godot, whom Vladimir and Estragon wait for and believe that he can save them from their meaningless life, does not show up at all, even at the end of the story. Meanwhile, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz still do not get the answer of their existence, even when they are led to their death.

The only difference between the two plays is Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* passively wait for someone to give meaning to their life, while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* actively look for the meaning of their life by themselves. However, both attempts conducted by the major characters fail because from the absurdist playwrights' point of view, a human's life is basically meaningless.

To conclude my analysis, both *Waiting for Godot* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* are probably not easy to read. Since both of them are absurd plays,

it is sometimes hard to understand the meaning behind the lines and the events; thus, it makes them quite challenging to analyze. However, both plays are two examples of serious, deep, and brilliant works of literature that people can enjoy. We are forced to think deeply to find its interpretation. In my opinion, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is a better play than *Waiting of Godot* because it is richer in the plot and contains more humor, since Stoppard is also known for his comedy. I think it is brilliant to make a story from the minor characters who are fated to die in somebody's play in order to see the events from their point of view. This is probably what makes Stoppard successful in trying to make the reader sympathize with the characters' fate.

